Afrobarometer Paper No. 20

DOWN TO EARTH: CHANGES IN ATTITUDES TOWARD DEMOCRACY AND MARKETS IN NIGERIA

By Peter Lewis, Etannibi Alemika, and Michael Bratton

A comparative series of national public attitude surveys on democracy, markets and civil society in Africa.

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by Peter Lewis, Etannibi Alemika
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August 2002

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I. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Round 2 of the Afrobarometer survey on "Popular Attitudes Toward Democracy and Markets" was conducted in Nigeria in August 2001. This was the second in a series of public attitude surveys in Nigeria, and follows on a previous poll in January-February 2000. The 2001 survey was administered by the Afrobarometer research network in collaboration with Management Systems International. The Lagos-based firm Research and Marketing Services (RMS) conducted the fieldwork and processed questionnaire data. Drs. Peter Lewis (American University), Etannibi Alemika (University of Jos), Michael Bratton (Michigan State University), and Zeric Smith (Management Systems International) directed survey design, oversaw implementation, and analyzed survey results. Funding was provided by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The survey drew upon a nationally-representative, random sample of Nigerians. All six of the country's informal geopolitical zones were covered, including 29 of the 36 states. In all, 2190 Nigerians of voting age were interviewed to find out what ordinary Nigerians think about recent political and economic developments, and to assess changes in popular attitudes since the political transition in 1999.

Regarding attitudes toward democratic performance:

• **Nigerians have come "down to earth" in their assessments of the country's political conditions.** Post-transition euphoria has given way to political realism among the public. Nigerians are less content with current political circumstances than they were 18 months ago, and less enthusiastic about the system of democracy. These changes indicate that many people today are coming to terms with the difficulties of democratic change, in contrast to the largely uncritical views expressed in the wake of the transition.

• **Public satisfaction with democratic performance has diminished sharply in the last 18 months.** The proportion of Nigerians who say they are satisfied with the way democracy works has gone down from 84 percent to 55 percent. General dissatisfaction is echoed by negative assessments of government performance on key policy issues.

• **Most people are not satisfied with the performance of elected representatives.** Only about 45 percent approve the performance of their representative to the National Assembly, state government, or Local Government Council. The majority of Nigerians do not believe that their representatives are concerned with their problems or work for their interests.

• **President Obasanjo has a substantial approval rating.** The chief executive is assessed favorably (in August 2001) by 72 percent of those interviewed, and 82 percent say they trust the President.

• **There is diminished trust for key democratic institutions.** Public trust has diminished in the National Assembly, the electoral authorities, and local governments.

Regarding support for democracy:

• **Public support for democracy has declined, but still remains high.** Overall, 71 percent of Nigerians say they prefer democracy to any other political system, as compared with 81 percent in 2000. Despite softening commitment, however, the great majority of Nigerians still believe that democracy is the best system for the country.

• **A majority of Nigerians continue to reject non-democratic political alternatives, especially military rule.** Only 15 percent agree that a non-democratic system might be good for the country, and

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eight of ten explicitly reject a return of military rule. Fewer than half of Nigerians display any trust for the armed forces.

• **Nigerians remain patient with democratic rule, and optimistic about the future.** Although disappointed by many aspects of the current system, 71 percent of Nigerians believe that democracy should be given time to work, and 62 percent believe that democracy is capable of solving most of the country's problems.

With regard to public involvement in politics:

• **Civic participation remains solid since the transition to democracy.** Nine in ten adult Nigerians are members of some type of association. Most belong to religious groups, though nearly 40 percent also report membership in non-religious civic organizations. There are some signs that civic participation has increased under democratic rule.

• **Nigerians feel more confident about participating in politics.** A greater proportion express interest in public affairs, and considerably more people say they discuss politics with others. There is increased confidence that citizens can voice their opinions and get together to bring their concerns to political leaders. At the same time, many people are intimidated by politics and unsure of their influence on government.

• **The public has little confidence in elected representatives, however, and there is little engagement between politicians and citizens.** Very few Nigerians have had direct contact with elected officials in the past year, preferring to turn to religious leaders or other influential persons for help with their problems.

Turning to attitudes toward the economy:

• **Economic problems are uppermost among the concerns of Nigerians.** When asked their opinion of the nation's leading problems, Nigerians mention jobs, poverty, food, and economic management more often than any others.

• **Nigerians are only moderately satisfied with the state of the economy, and there are signs of increased economic distress.** Slightly more Nigerians (48 percent) are satisfied with the economy than those who are dissatisfied (43 percent), while more than half approve the government's management of the economy. Only one-third believe economic conditions have improved in the last year, however, and a growing number report shortages of food and other key household services.

• **Worsening economic inequality is a particular concern for many Nigerians.** A growing majority believes the government is not effectively handling the problem of inequality, and more than half think that the gap between rich and poor has worsened under the current regime.

• **Nonetheless, most Nigerians remain optimistic about economic prospects.** Nearly eight out of ten Nigerians expect better economic conditions within the next year, and people express high hopes about the future economic prospects for their children.

• **The public shows consistent preferences for democracy, but mixed views on the direction of the economy.** While there is strong consensus on a democratic political system, Nigerians are generally split down the middle between those who prefer a market-oriented economy, and those inclined toward greater government involvement. This division of opinion can be seen on a variety of economic issues.

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• **Political and economic liberalism do not always go together.** In general, free-marketeers tend to be democrats, but those who are committed to a democratic system do not always prefer a market economy.

• **Nigerians have diverse views about measures to reform the economy.** When considering economic reform, Nigerians hold varying opinions. While many people approve of the government's efforts to reduce its role in the economy, most believe that previous economic reforms have been detrimental to the majority of Nigerians.

• **The public remains patient with economic reform.** Despite considerable dissatisfaction with the Structural Adjustment Program and related policies, almost two-thirds of Nigerians are willing to stick with current economic policies in the hope of future economic improvements.

• **Popular views on economic performance influence satisfaction with democracy, but not patience with democracy.** Nigerians who have a negative appraisal of the country's economy, or of their own living conditions, are much less satisfied with democracy and more doubtful about the extent of democratization in the country. Regardless of how they evaluate the economy, however, most people remain patient with the democratic system.

Considering the rule of law:

• **Many Nigerians are concerned about personal security and social conflict under the present government.** Nearly two-fifths say they feel unsafe at home, and one-quarter report being victimized by crime. Three-quarters report some violent conflicts among groups in their communities.

• **The public has little trust in law enforcement authorities.** Nigerians have decreasing confidence in law enforcement. Only one in ten has substantial trust in the police, and more than 95 percent believe the police are corrupt. Despite these concerns, eight of ten Nigerians believe the police will catch offenders guilty of serious crimes.

•**There is limited trust in government to provide for the resolution of conflicts.** While a majority (61 percent) of Nigerians approves of the government's efforts to resolve conflicts, most people would also prefer that conflict resolution be handled by communities and citizens rather than government or security agencies.

• **Most Nigerians do not see effective rule of law under the democratic system.** The public believes that the judiciary has somewhat more integrity than the police. In general, Nigerians do not believe that the law is applied equally and fairly.

• **The public continues to view corruption as a widespread problem.** Almost unanimously, Nigerians believe that public officials are tainted by some corruption. Nearly one-half report personal experience in paying bribes.

• **There is diminishing confidence in the current government's efforts to reduce corruption.** The government's anti-corruption efforts have earned lower assessments now than 18 months ago**.**

• **Despite these problems, the democratic system is still widely viewed as less corrupt than the previous military regime.** Forty-two percent believe the current government is less corrupt than the military system, while 29 percent believe the problem has gotten worse.

• **Concerns about the rule of law influence satisfaction with democracy, but they have limited effects on democratic commitment or patience with the current system.** Nigerians who express more concern about personal security are substantially less satisfied with the performance of democracy. But they are no less patient with democracy, or more likely to endorse non-democratic

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political options. The same is true for corruption: among those most concerned with corruption, satisfaction with the system is lower, but democratic commitment is not changed and patience is only modestly affected.

Nigerians in different regions hold diverse views on political and economic affairs:

• **Regarding democracy:** Citizens in the southern states are less satisfied with democracy than those in the north, but they have strong preferences for a democratic system and they largely reject non-democratic alternatives. Citizens in the northern states are not as critical of the current government as those in the south, yet they are less strongly attached to the regime of democracy, and have a greater tolerance for possible alternatives to the present system.

• **On key national issues:**
Regarding the *distribution of oil revenues*, the South South is the lone region where a majority of citizens (71 percent) believe that more revenues should go to oil-producing regions. There is some sympathy for this view in other southern regions, but little support in the north or in Lagos.

Regarding *Sharia law*, there is a clear regional divide: a majority (60 percent) of those in the North West support the expansion of Sharia law, along with 43 percent in the North East. Support is weak in the Middle Belt, and large majorities in all southern regions oppose the movement toward Sharia.

Nigeria's Muslims are not united in their views on Sharia law. While two-thirds of Muslims in the northern states support the expansion of Sharia, nearly 60 percent of southern Muslims believe in a national common law system.

Nigerians strongly support national unity: three out of four believe the nation should remain united, while only one-fifth feel the country should be broken up. A majority of citizens in all regions support the idea of unity. Affirmation of national unity is highest in Lagos, the northern states and the Middle Belt, and weakest in the South South and South East.

• **Regarding the economy:** Nigerians in the southern states are less satisfied with current economic conditions than those in the north, and relatively more critical of government policies. Yet many in the south also express stronger preferences for a market economy.

The Afrobarometer allows comparisons among African countries and across regions. Seen in international perspective, Nigeria shows these features:

• **Support for democracy in Nigeria** is higher than in South Africa, but lower than in other countries such as Botswana, Tanzania, and Ghana. As transition euphoria has faded, Nigeria has dropped (since 2000) from being a continental leader in commitment to democracy to being slightly above average for Africa. If we look to Brazil for further comparison, it is possible that democratic commitment may continue to decline in Nigeria.

• **Satisfaction with democracy in Nigeria** is no better than average for the Afrobarometer sample of 12 African democracies. In the period from January 2000 to August 2001, Nigeria has gone from the most satisfied public to eighth place among this group of countries.

• **Opposition to authoritarian rule in Nigeria is moderate by African (and international) comparison.** Opposition to military rule remains strong, but there is less resistance to a civilian strongman than in Tanzania, Ghana, or the Czech Republic.

• **Nigerians have a comparatively low estimation of their democracy.** More Nigerians see their country as a democracy with many problems than elsewhere in Africa, and fewer Nigerians see a fully established democracy than in other countries on the continent.

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• **Nigerians are comparatively satisfied with their economy.** As difficult as conditions may be, Nigerians express more satisfaction with the state of their economy than any other country measured by the Afrobarometer.

• **Nigerians are more polarized than other Africans on issues of economic reform.** They are comparatively more likely to accept school fees, though much more opposed to retrenchment of civil servants.

• **Nigerians are relatively patient with economic reform. Despite the unpopular response to many reforms associated with structural adjustment, Nigerians are willing to stick with current reforms and associated hardships in the hope of future economic improvement. They express more patience with reform than Ghanaians, Ugandans, Malians, or Tanzanians.**

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II. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria's New Democracy

When Nigeria inaugurated a new civilian government in May 1999 – the country's first elected regime in 16 years – the change was warmly welcomed throughout the country. After three decades of military rule (interrupted only by the Second Republic from 1979-83), Nigerians hoped for a new era of greater liberties and better governance. The shambles of authoritarian government left a legacy of misrule, corruption, human rights abuses, widespread social tension, institutional decay and economic decline. Many Nigerians expressed high expectations of the new democratic dispensation.

From the outset, the administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo has confronted a formidable array of problems. Nigeria's transition is fraught with multiple challenges, and prospects for the consolidation of democracy are precarious. The difficulties of creating effective and accountable government have been intensified by a lingering economic crisis and a rising tide of ethnic and religious conflict. Concerns over the role of the military, as well as Nigeria's basic identity as a nation-state, compel the attention of political leaders and the public. The new government must also grapple with widespread poverty, endemic corruption, social violence and crime. Public aspirations for political liberties, better economic prospects, greater security, improved services, and more responsive leadership pose essential challenges for the democratic regime.

More than two years have passed since the change of government; it is well past the mid-term of the first presidential administration and little more than a year before the next elections. In that time, the country has witnessed many achievements, difficulties, and controversies. A substantial restoration of political freedoms can be observed in the lively realm of civic associations, a vigorous independent media, and the activities of the political parties. Political life has been turbulent, as politicians explore their powers and new democratic institutions are gradually tested. There has been turmoil in the National Assembly, with three Senate presidents and two Speakers of the House of Representatives since the transition. President Obasanjo has often entered into conflict with the legislature, and with a number of activist state governors. At the same time, some important legislation has gone forward including the annual budget, anti-corruption provisions and the Niger Delta Development Commission. Personnel shifts and retraining within the armed forces reflect a widespread concern for military professionalization. The Oputa Panel has also begun to address the need to account for past political abuses.

The broad contours of federalism, involving a range of constitutional and fiscal issues, have been uppermost in the minds of many Nigerians. Protests of political 'marginalization' are heard from different corners of Nigeria, and concerns of exclusion are manifest in several areas. From the minorities of the Niger Delta arise calls for a greater share of oil revenues and further efforts at development and environmental redress. Among the northern states, the expansion of Sharia law has prompted debate and contention in many communities. The calls by some southerners for constitutional review by a Sovereign National Conference have been no less controversial. As these debates unfold, regular eruptions of ethnic and religious violence, accompanied by the mobilization of vigilantes in many regions, give rise to concerns over public security and the very stability of the nation-state. Several violent incidents involving the police and the army raise further problems in defining the professional role of the security forces and protecting human rights.

Stubborn economic difficulties pose a further challenge. Nigeria's economy has declined steeply in recent years, a downturn evident in widespread joblessness and poverty, deficient provision of public services, decaying infrastructure, poor productivity and low investment. The sources of economic failure include misguided economic policies, erratic management, pervasive corruption, and uncertain prices for oil and other commodities. The path to economic recovery, however, is a matter of active debate. Some Nigerians call for liberalization of the nation's economy, urging privatization and deregulation and inviting a role for foreign investors and multilateral institutions such as the

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International Monetary Fund. Many others insist upon the government's continued involvement in the economy, and are wary of foreign advice or investment.

Against this background, it is important to ask: **What are the attitudes of Nigerians toward democracy and markets? And how are these attitudes evolving over time?**

Specifically, a number of important questions arise with regard to political affairs. How do citizens evaluate the new democratic regime, and the performance of the current government? Among average Nigerians, what are the country's leading problems, and how well do they think their leaders are addressing their concerns? Do Nigerians value democracy, and to what degree are they willing to consider alternative forms of governance? What are the views of people on such important issues as national unity, Sharia law, revenue allocation, and corruption? In what ways do Nigerians participate in politics? These and other important questions help us to gauge the nation's political mindset.

In economic affairs, the questions are equally pressing: How well are Nigerians doing since the change of government? How do they rate the government's performance in tackling important economic problems, and what are their expectations of the future? Do Nigerians have strong preferences for the shape of their economy, especially the role of government? What are their views on structural adjustment and related reforms?

In any democracy, the views of the public are a foundation of political life. Citizens' attitudes can influence the political agenda and hold leaders to account. High levels of popular legitimacy might strengthen an emerging democracy, just as a loss of support could weaken governance or even imperil democratic rule. The values, desires, and expectations of citizens can serve as a guide to leaders, or they may be a cause of dissent when officials are badly out of step with the popular mood. A better understanding of public opinion can also inform the actions of political parties, civic associations, academics, the media and others interested in public affairs.

To better understand popular attitudes in Nigeria's new democracy, a national survey conducted in August 2001 canvassed Nigerians on a broad array of political and economic questions. The 2001 survey, conducted by the Afrobarometer research network, followed up a similar poll conducted in January-February 2000. These surveys, the most comprehensive of their type, provide a wide vantage on the evolving views of the Nigerian public. This report analyzes the most recent survey results and compares them with highlights from the earlier survey, suggesting important trends in public opinion.

Background to the 2001 Survey

The study was designed as a national sample survey, meaning that we posed the same set of questions to a small sample of the population who were selected to represent the adult population of Nigeria as a whole. The target population for the survey was adult citizens of Nigeria, namely persons at least 18 years old and eligible to vote. To draw a representative cross-section of the voting age population, a random sample was selected.

The survey covered all six informal geopolitical regions of the country, including 29 of the 36 states, with the number of interviews in each region being proportional to the region's population size. To adapt the questionnaire to local conditions, we translated the English version into six local languages: Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Kanuri, Tiv, and Ijaw. All interviews were administered in the language of the respondent's choice. The survey questionnaire included several items that had been asked in previous surveys in Nigeria and in other countries, so as to provide a basis for comparing Nigeria with other African nations as well as other regions of the world.

The Afrobarometer – an international research network that tracks public attitudes in fifteen African countries – conducted the survey in collaboration with Management Systems International

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(MSI).[1] A Nigerian survey research firm, Research and Marketing Services (RMS), conducted the fieldwork, assisted with sampling methods, and processed questionnaire data. Drs. Peter Lewis (American University), Etannibi Alemika (University of Jos), Michael Bratton (Michigan State University), and Zeric Smith (MSI) directed survey design, oversaw implementation, and analyzed survey results. A summary of the social background of the sample is presented in the following table:

Table 1: Social and Economic Characteristics of the Sample[2]

	2000 Survey	*2001 Survey*
Number of People Surveyed	3603	2190
Male: Female Ratio	50 : 50	50 : 50
Median Age[3]	29	29
Urban: Rural Ratio	42.7 : 57.3	48.7 : 51.3
Education	*percent*	*percent*
No schooling	25.3	25.5
Primary only	17.0	17.3
Secondary only	37.0	38.3
Post-secondary	20.7	19.0
Occupation[4]	*percent*	*percent*
Informal marketer	18.6	16.4
Student	15.3	17.3
Farmer/fisherman	13.4	20.8
Housewife	12.8	11.4
Artisan	10.5	2.7
Businessperson	6.2	6.8
Government employee	5.6	4.8
Languages	*percent*	*percent*
Hausa	31.0	23.9
Yoruba	25.5	23.2
Igbo	16.7	16.8
Ijaw[5]	1.6	4.5
Total Number of Home Languages	85+	84+
Income	*percent*	*percent*
No earnings (students, dependents, etc.)	14.6	12.1
Less than 5,000 Naira/month	72.4	77.8 (< ₦ 6,000)
More than 30,000 Naira/month	2.0	2.1 (> ₦ 50,000)

[1] The contents of the questionnaire were modeled on a series of Afrobarometer surveys completed or planned in at least 14 other African countries. The Afrobarometer is a joint enterprise of the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA), the Centre for Democracy and Development in Ghana (CDD-Ghana), and Michigan State University (MSU). In addition to Nigeria the countries are: Botswana, Cape Verde, Ghana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Information on the Afrobarometer and survey results for selected countries can be obtained from any of the above partner institutions, or online at http://www.afrobarometer.org/.

[2] Note that in the figures and tables throughout this document, percentages reported may not total 100 percent because of rounding and because they do not include all responses categories, especially residual categories (don't know, no answer, etc.).

[3] This is the "statistical middle" of the total age range of respondents, which extended from 18-90. In other words, half of the respondents fell above this age, and half below.

[4] This is a selected list of occupations from the total sample.

[5] In the 2001 survey, Ijaw language speakers were *oversampled*, or selected in numbers greater than their share of the population. The oversample (n=127) permitted a fuller analysis of attitudes among this community. When analyzing the total national sample, we compensated by weighting all responses.

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The sample for the most recent survey included 2190 persons, fewer than the 3603 interviewed the previous year. The reduced sample still allows a high level of confidence in the results. The statistical criteria of survey research tell us that the current sample provides a confidence level of 95percent with a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 2.1 percent.[6]

Another difference can be found in the somewhat lower proportion of rural respondents in the recent survey (and a correspondingly greater urban share). This reflects a better current estimate of the true level of urbanization in Nigeria. But our sampling and field methods in 2001 also allowed us to reach out more effectively to rural residents in small settlements and isolated areas, improving the representativeness of the sample.

As can be seen in Table 1, the samples are similar in other respects, being almost identical in the distributions for gender, age, and education. The language and religious distributions are virtually the same from year to year, and income distribution is also comparable despite a slight change in measurement. In terms of occupation, more farmers are included in the latest survey, reflecting changes in the coverage of the rural sample, while fewer artisans (e.g., mechanics, tailors, vulcanizers, and craftspeople) were canvassed.

Table1 points to the diversity of social factors that may influence opinions and attitudes. In the course of our analysis, we have considered the effects of several different social characteristics (including gender, age, education, and income) on citizens' views. In many instances these factors did not meaningfully influence opinions, and so we report only the overall national results. In the later sections of the paper, we consider the influences of social identity and region on attitudes.

[6] In other words, there is a 95 percent certainty that the results accurately reflect the views of all adult Nigerians within plus or minus 2.1 percentage points.

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III. ATTITUDES TOWARD DEMOCRACY

A central theme of this report is that Nigerians have come "down to earth" in their attitudes toward democracy: their assessments have moved more into line with political realities. In the wake of the military era (especially the notorious years under General Sani Abacha) many citizens seemed euphoric at the departure of the military and the return of political liberties. Yet in their collective relief over the demise of dictatorship, Nigerians appeared to relinquish a critical attitude toward public life. Across the board, approval ratings for the government and assessments of democratic performance were high, indeed greater than in many of the world's young democracies. And yet these attitudes seemed at odds with the obvious difficulties of governance. On the streets, in the media, among analysts and leaders of opinion, it was evident that the nation still faced many stubborn political, economic and social problems.

In reporting the results of the first Afrobarometer survey, we expected these attitudes to change over time. As we wrote:

> high evaluations of government performance, and the lofty expectations of rapid progress in governance and the economy, bespeak a degree of acclamation that is not entirely realistic. It is very likely that the public will resume a more critical stance as the transitory enthusiasm wears off. . . . We would then expect to see assessments of performance (of both the democratic system and the incumbent government) decline markedly in subsequent surveys. If [our] presumption of an underlying democratic culture is correct, however, then declining *satisfaction* with democracy will not necessarily be mirrored by diminished *commitment* to democratic governance. (Lewis and Bratton, 2000a: 8)

This is largely what we find in the current survey of Nigerians' political attitudes. Satisfaction with democracy has declined steeply. There has also been a slide in assessments of government performance, approval ratings for most public officials, and trust in many political institutions. General preferences for democracy as an ideal system of government have also gone down, although less sharply than assessments of actual performance.

Nigerians remain patient with democracy, however, and they express little sentiment for a return to authoritarian rule. Popular disdain for military rule remains high, and Nigerians largely reject other non-democratic political options. They are also attached to democratic attributes such as freedom of speech, checks on presidential power, free and fair elections, and vigorous party competition.

The new mood of political realism revives the Nigerian traditions of criticism, debate, and vociferous complaint. At the moment, Nigerians are widely dissatisfied with their democracy, and the post-transition "honeymoon" is clearly over. Yet the public prefers democracy, however imperfect, to any alternatives – and by a considerable margin. There is limited appetite for a return to military rule, and scant desire for one-party dominance or a civilian strongman. Furthermore, Nigerians continue to express a commitment to core democratic values, and they are inclined to forbear with the democratic system.

Support for and Satisfaction with Democracy

These trends are best illustrated by considering two key questions on support for and satisfaction with democracy. The comparative results over time are found in Figure 1. They show a significant drop in public preferences for democracy, although Nigerians still value democracy by a substantial majority. There is a remarkable decline in satisfaction with democracy, by nearly 30 percentage points. In 2001, a bit more than half of the public expresses approval of current political conditions.

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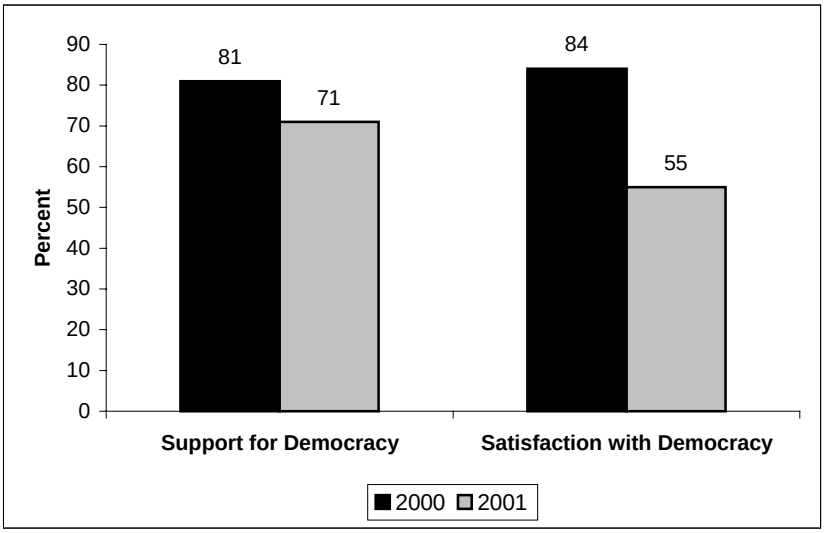
Figure 1: Support for and Satisfaction with Democracy



The results should be seen in perspective. In most democratic countries, public satisfaction with democracy is lower – often substantially lower – than the preference for democracy as a political system. In other words, democracy in practice usually falls short of citizens' ideals. In our first Nigerian survey, conducted several months after the handover to democratic rule, we found a remarkable pattern: the level of satisfaction with democracy was actually *higher* than that for democratic preferences. Four-fifths of Nigerians revealed an attachment to democracy as a political system, yet even more (84 percent) expressed satisfaction with the way the new regime was working. This range of opinion was virtually unique in the world. Today, as we elaborate below, Nigeria looks more typical of other democracies.

Government Performance

We can find some of the sources of reduced satisfaction by looking at elements of government performance. Evaluations of the government's success in handling key problems, seen in Figure 2, show declining confidence in several areas. Performance ratings are down significantly on such economic problems as inflation, inequality, food security, corruption, and to a lesser extent unemployment. These economic issues are among the country's paramount problems according to most Nigerians (see Figure 10 below), and this suggests that the government is faltering on areas of key concern to the public. With regard to social services such as education, health care, and public safety, however, the government seems to be holding its own in the popular view. The reasons for the difference are not entirely clear. We suggest that the effects of prices, unemployment, food supply, and corruption are more immediately felt at the personal and household level, while trends in education and health services may change more slowly and are harder to monitor. It is also possible that some services have improved or remained stable. This is suggested in Table 16, where many citizens see improved service delivery under the current regime.

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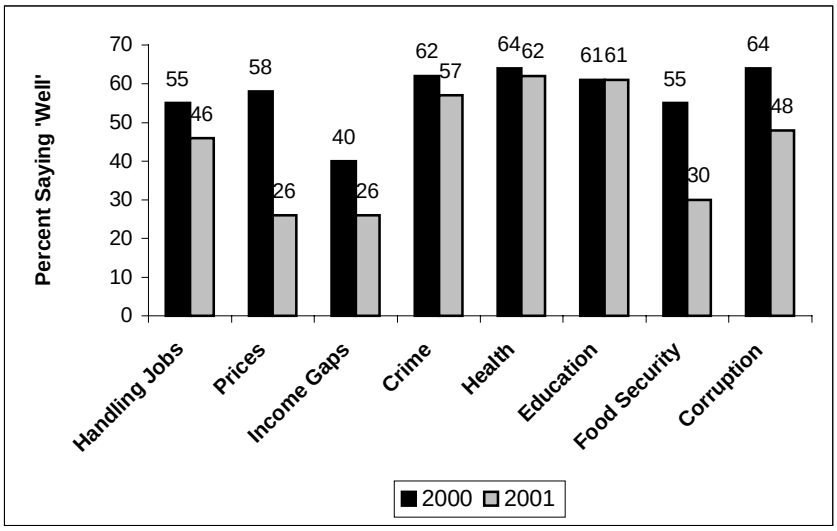
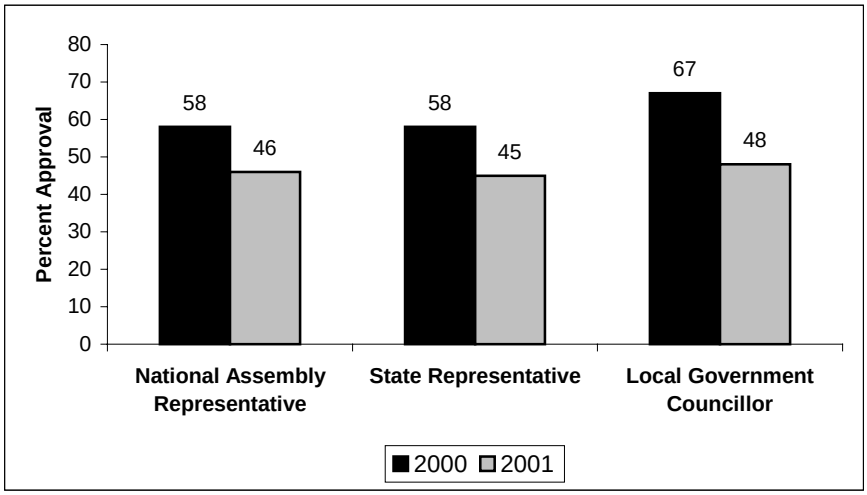
Figure 2: Evaluations of the Government's Policy Performance



Turning to the evaluation of elected officials in Figure 3, we also see lower rankings nearly across the board. Considering performance over the past 12 months, citizens show less satisfaction with their National Assembly representative, state representative and local government councilor. In early 2000, more than half of Nigerians said they were satisfied with the performance of their national and state representatives, and more than two thirds approved of local government officials; today, only a minority does so. Local government officials elicit the largest drop in satisfaction, suggesting that this tier of government – the closest to the people on a day-to-day basis – is falling well short of expectations.

Figure 3: Performance of Elected Representatives



President Obasanjo, however, garners better assessments from the public. In August 2001, 72 percent approve of his performance. More than eight in ten of those interviewed express a measure of trust for the president, although only 15 percent say they trust him a great deal. This reflects a decline from the effusive responses in the first survey, when nine out of ten people expressed some trust, and it is notable that only half as many people express the highest level of trust for the chief executive in 2001. Evidently, much of the Nigerian public distinguishes the chief executive from other elected officials when evaluating government performance. We note, however, that approval for the president is often fluid, and may shift rapidly in response to changing national circumstances.

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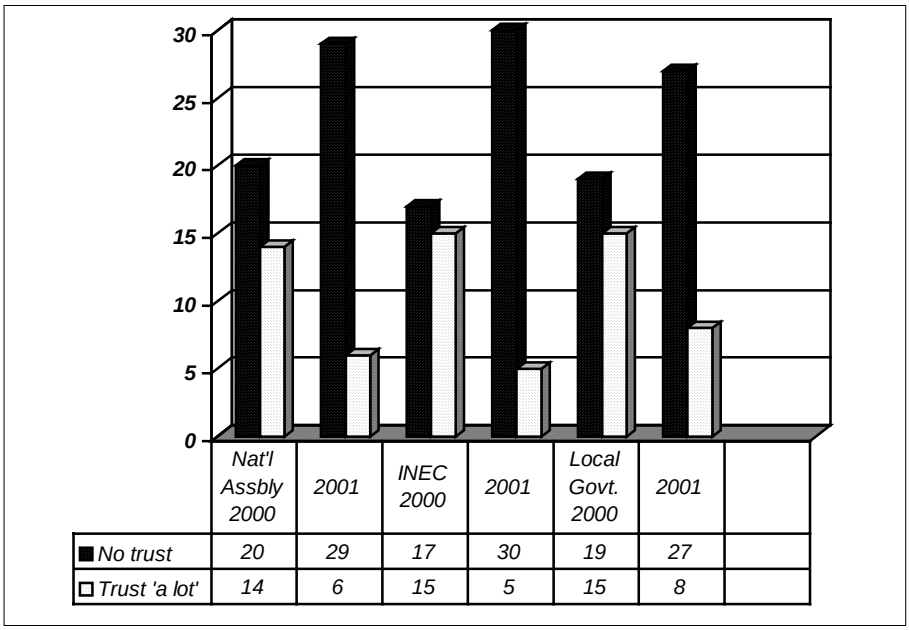
Table 2: Views of President Obasanjo
(percent)

	2000	*2001*
Approve performance	n/a	72
Trust president	90	82
(of which: Trust "a lot")	30	15

Trust in Democratic Institutions

Along with substantial disappointment in the performance of particular leaders and politicians, Nigerians are more ambivalent in their regard for important political institutions. Figure 4 shows declining levels of public trust in the National Assembly, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), and local governments.[7] Overall, confidence has dropped most for the INEC, possibly reflecting the growing controversy over electoral regulations and the 2001 electoral bill. While a majority of Nigerians express a degree of trust in each of these institutions, only a minority is highly trustful, and the proportion of citizens who express very high levels of trust has diminished. These important institutions thus have tentative legitimacy among the electorate.

Figure 4: Trust in Political Institutions



The 1999 Constitution, which sets out the fundamental laws of the new civilian government, has been a subject of controversy since it was hastily promulgated by the last military regime. Despite much public criticism of its inadequacies, a majority of the Nigerian public expresses acceptance of the present Constitution. As seen in Table 3, more than half of those interviewed believe the Constitution expresses the people's "values and aspirations," while only one-fifth disapprove of this charter.

[7] The wording on questions of trust was different in the two surveys. In the 2000 survey, respondents were asked "Do you trust the following institutions?" with response options divided as follows: I do not trust them at all, I distrust them somewhat, I trust them somewhat, and I trust them a lot. In 2001, we asked "How much do you trust the following?" The responses were categorized this way: Not at all/A little bit/Quite a lot/A lot. When comparing the two responses, we treated the first option ("I do not trust them at all" and "Not at all") as identical – in each case this response indicates *no trust*. Other responses indicate some degree of trust, even though the level of trust may be quite low ("I distrust them somewhat"). "A lot" of trust was treated as a comparable category. These criteria allow us to evaluate levels of trust over time.

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Table 3: Views on the Constitution
(percent)

	Agree	*Disagree*
"Our constitution expresses the values and aspirations of the Nigerian people"	56	23

Extent of Democracy and Patience with the Democratic System

Clearly Nigerians are less enthusiastic about the condition of the political system, yet the prevailing view on the extent of democratization has remained fairly consistent. As seen in Table 4 a substantial proportion (about 46 percent) regard the country as "a democracy with major problems," the same level as in our first survey. Nearly 95 percent perceive some degree of democracy, yet less than 10 percent regard Nigeria as a "full democracy" with few significant problems. The proportion offering this most positive evaluation has dropped by nearly half, providing further indication that the public is increasingly sober in their assessment of political change.

Table 4: Extent of Democracy
(percent)

	2000	*2001*
Not a democracy	1	5
Democracy with major problems	46	46
Democracy with minor problems	33	37
A full democracy	17	10

Nigerians nonetheless appear to remain patient about realizing the benefits of democratic rule, and they express substantial confidence in the regime of democracy. Table 5 shows a modest decrease in patience, as about 71 percent of respondents feel that the government should be allowed time to deal with problems, compared with 80 percent in the first survey. The most recent survey also posed a new question asking: What proportion of the country's problems can the government solve? A majority of respondents believes the government can solve "most" or "all" problems.

Table 5: Patience with Democracy

	2000	*2001*
Our present system of elected government should be given more time to deal with inherited problems *(% agree)*	80	71
If our present system cannot produce results soon, we should try another form of government *(% agree)*	16	24
What proportion of the country's problems do you think the government can solve? *(% answering most/all)*	n/a	62

Conditional Support for Democracy

Another measure of democratic commitment is the relative attractiveness of non-democratic alternatives. In this area, attitudes have softened from the adamant rejection of non-democratic politics found in the early months of the new government. In both surveys, respondents were asked to appraise three political alternatives: government under a single political party; "strongman" rule in which a president governs without a national assembly or elections; and the return of military rule. In each case substantial majorities reject these alternatives, as seen in Table 6.

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Table 6: Alternatives to Democracy
(percent who disapprove of each)

	2000	*2001*
One party rule	83	78
Presidential "strongman"	88	71
Army rule	90	81

Fewer people, however, are willing to dismiss these options outright. Just as more Nigerians would now consider alternatives to democracy as a regime, a similar proportion might contemplate particular governing arrangements that impair or replace democracy. In particular, there is considerable acceptance of a strong executive who would rule without checks on power. Furthermore, the proportion who reject *all three* authoritarian options has dropped from 76 percent in early 2000, to 58 percent in August 2001. Responding to the general question on democratic preferences, the proportion of those who would consider non-democratic government has risen over the same period from 9 percent to 15 percent. These attitudes point to a greater measure of equivocation toward the democratic system.

With this observation in mind, it is important to acknowledge the degree to which Nigerians continue to choose democratic politics: seven of ten disapprove of strongman rule, while eight of ten reject the dominance of politics by a single party, or the return of the military. The repudiation of military rule is underscored by the low levels of public trust in the armed forces: only 14 percent express substantial trust for the army, while 52 percent do not trust them at all.

Democratic Practices

In a more affirmative sense, popular dispositions toward democracy are reflected in response to questions about key aspects of the democratic process. Nigerians for the most part uphold the ideas of competitive politics and the accountability of leaders. As seen in Table 7, "regular, open and honest elections" are favored by 85 percent of those interviewed, and 63 percent support having numerous political parties rather than limitations on party choice.

Even though many prefer a multiplicity of parties, there is a widespread belief that party competition frequently leads to conflict. And trust for the parties themselves is at best lukewarm, as only a quarter of respondents express a high degree of confidence in the ruling party (the People's Democratic Party, or PDP), and a mere 16 percent have substantial trust in the opposition parties.

Table 7: Views on Elections and Parties
(percent agreeing with statement)

Choose leaders through regular, open and honest elections	85
Adopt other methods for choosing leaders	13
Unnecessary to have many parties	31
Many political parties are needed	63
Party competition leads to conflict *(% saying often/always)*	61
Trust ruling party *(% w/ high trust)*	26
Trust opposition parties *(% w/ high trust)*	16

Many Nigerians are sophisticated in their evaluations of party politics: nearly two-thirds of those who strongly support the idea of multiple parties also acknowledge that competition often gives rise to conflict. And, even among those who most firmly believe that parties cause conflict, 60 percent also uphold the need for many parties rather than placing limits on party choice.

Much of the public favors limits on presidential power. Eight out of ten, for instance, believe that the president must adhere to the term limits set by the Constitution. A majority of respondents in

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August 2001 believe that President Obasanjo generally respects the Constitution, but about one-fifth believe he sometimes ignores the nation's fundamental laws. With regard to making laws, two-thirds favor the authority of the legislature, rather than placing the president in the leading role. In sum, even though some Nigerians are beginning to be tempted by the idea of a strong civilian leader, others hold no sympathy for a domineering executive and show little acceptance of measures that would limit political choice. In view of the controversy over the President's efforts to amend the 2001 electoral law, it will be important to observe in later surveys whether the public continues to approve of the President's legislative and constitutional role.

Political Rights and Liberties

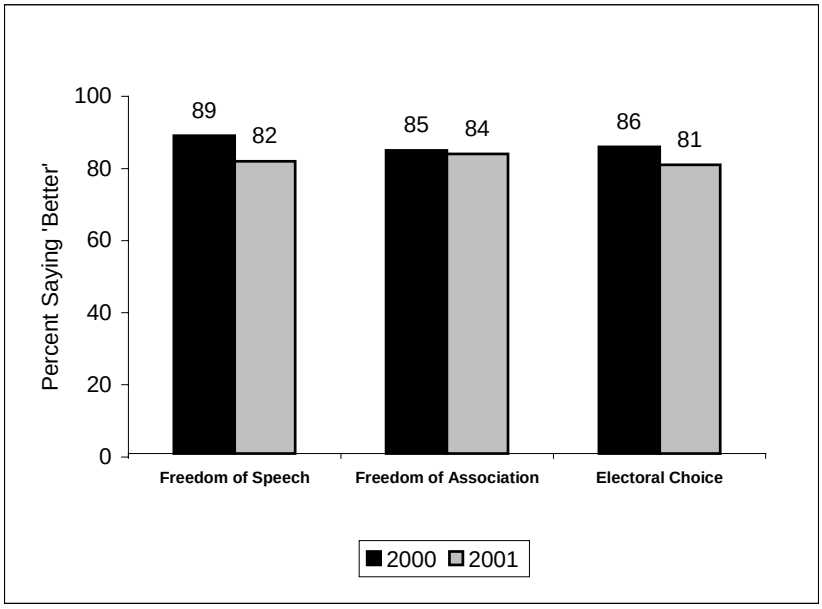
The state of democratic rights and liberties is a basic feature of democratic performance, as well as an important measure of popular ideals. In democracies around the world, citizens value these political benefits, and we find this to be the case in Nigeria. When asked about their general expectations of democracy, just over half of those surveyed (see Table 8) point to the worth of a "free and equal voice" in political life, although 43 percent instead emphasize the need to provide economic benefits. Clearly, many Nigerians prize democracy for its freedoms and the promise of political equality, although a large proportion also looks to democracy as a vehicle for economic betterment.

Table 8: Worth of Democracy
(percent agreeing with statement)

Democracy is worth having because it allows everyone a free and equal voice in making decisions	52
Democracy is only worth having if it addresses everyone's basic economic needs	43

In each survey, Nigerians were asked to compare political conditions under the present government with those under the previous system of military rule. Figure 5 illustrates these assessments. With regard to freedoms of speech, political association, and electoral choice, public evaluations of the present regime are strongly positive, yet the contrast is slightly less vivid now than immediately after the departure of the military. Still, we see that Nigerians perceive a stark contrast between civilian rule and the military era.

Figure 5: Political Liberties
(current system compared with military rule)



Although liberties have greatly expanded since the military era, they are not unbounded, as seen in Table 9. The generally open climate for political expression is sometimes mitigated by hindrances from government, security forces, or fellow citizens. Nearly 90 percent of Nigerians believe that people rarely, if ever have to be careful about their political statements, in an international context where only about 40 percent on average feel such confidence in nine other African democracies. Thus, the climate for free expression is perceived to be unusually open in Nigeria. Still, more than two-thirds allow that there is a need for occasional caution about political expression, perhaps reflecting the enduring tensions and conflicts in Nigerian society.[8]

Although Nigerians broadly embrace freedom of speech, they are split in their views of how to deal with diverse opinions. While 44 percent support the idea that communities should talk until they reach consensus, about half lean toward the view that differences of opinion are inevitable and should be tolerated.

Table 9: Freedom of Speech

How often do people have to be careful about what they say about politics? *(% rarely/never)*	89
(of which: % rarely)	67
In order to make decisions in our community, we should talk until everyone agrees *(% agree)*	44
Since we will never agree on everything, we must learn to accept differences of opinion within our community *(% agree)*	52

Participation and Engagement

So far we have discussed evaluations of political performance and preferences for systems of government, while saying little about the role of average Nigerians in the political system. The engagement of citizens in public life, through civic participation and involvement in the political process, are crucial components of democracy. When citizens feel a sense of political *efficacy*, or confidence in their ability to influence public life, democratic legitimacy is strengthened. Alternatively, if much of the public is passive or cynical toward politics, then legitimacy suffers and the quality of political life is eroded (Putnam 1993, 2000; Norris 1999). If particular social groups are persistently excluded from the system, social frustration and resentment could be destabilizing for the regime.

As we have seen in both surveys, Nigerians participate extensively in non-government associations. In the latest survey, nine out of ten respondents claim membership in some type of association, a level of membership even higher than in the previous survey. As seen in Figure 6, religious groups claim the greatest proportion of membership by far, with nine of ten respondents belonging to such associations. Overall, about 37 percent report membership in a range of non-religious associations that included trade and farmer's unions, professional and business associations, and development associations.[9]

[8] It is not clear whether such caution about political speech is prompted by concern over government responses, or the reactions of fellow citizens.

[9] The 2000 survey included a broader range of organizations, asking about membership in the following types of associations or groups (apart from religious): trade/farmer's; sports; art/education; development; professional; women's; democracy; environmental; charitable; and other. Overall, 47 percent of respondents reported belonging to some civic group, and 20 percent were members of two or more associations. Between half and 60 percent of members claimed active membership.

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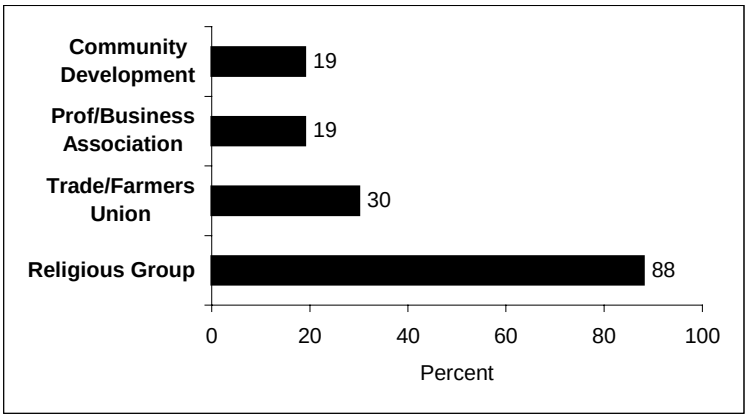
Figure 6: Association Membership
(percent who claim membership)

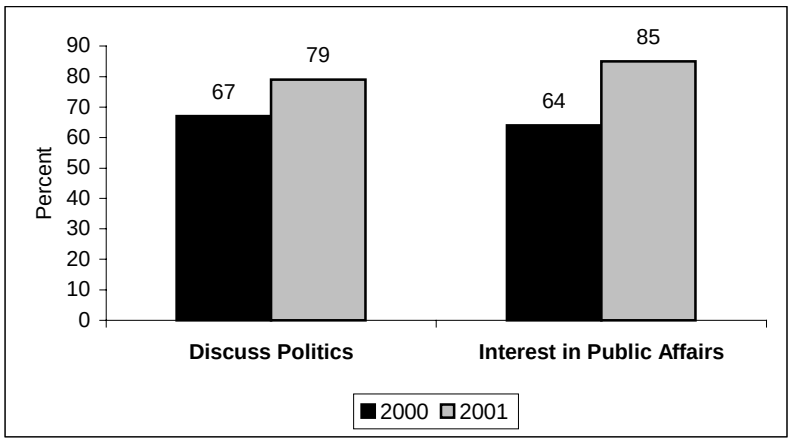


For reasons we have yet to determine, reported membership in these selected types of civic associations is twice the levels found in the 2000 survey. Without additional measures, however, it is difficult to conclude that civic membership has actually increased. We should also note that just over half of the members of civic groups describe themselves as playing an active role in their associations (compared with three-fourths of those in religious groups), tempering the impression of growing participation. Still, this points to participation by a substantial number of Nigerians. The perception of increased activity is reinforced by citizens' attendance at community meetings. Most recently, 52 percent said they had attended a community meeting within the past year, a slightly higher proportion than in the first survey (45 percent). Civic engagement is holding steady, if not rising, under democratic rule.

Political Interest and Participation

Interest in politics and public affairs has significantly increased since the transition to democracy. The level of interest expressed by Nigerians has grown substantially since our first survey. As illustrated in Figure 7, about 85 percent now express some interest in public affairs, and 79 percent say they discuss politics with others. Regardless of their feelings toward government or the political system, Nigerians appear to be broadly concerned with current affairs. A majority turn regularly (i.e., at least a few times per month) to some news outlet, with radio providing the most frequent source of information, followed by television and then newspapers.

Figure 7: Interest in Public Affairs



Does heightened interest in politics give rise to more active participation? Here the evidence is mixed. While Nigerians report higher attendance at community meetings, they do not air political concerns any more frequently: a little more than half in each survey (Table 10) say they have gathered

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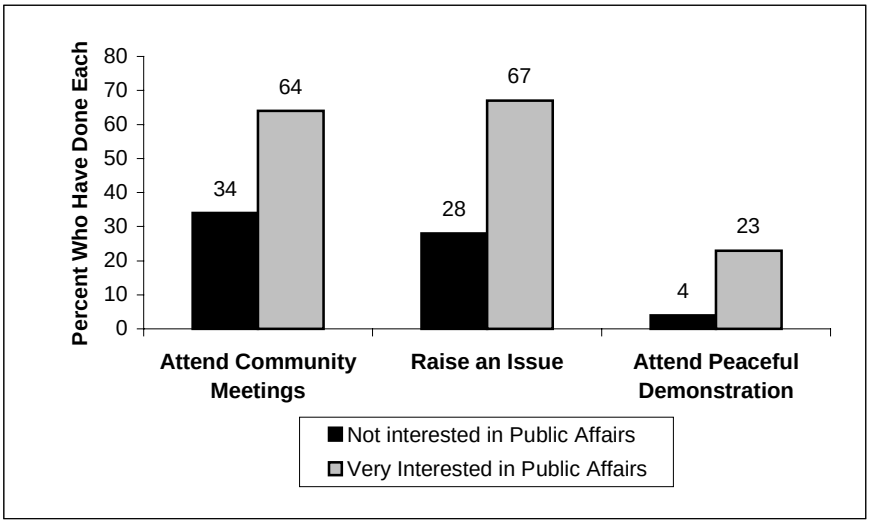
with others to raise an issue of common interest. We note, however, that the proportion of people who have attended a peaceful demonstration has doubled. Even though a minority of Nigerians engages in this form of protest, it appears that citizens are increasingly comfortable with exercising their political liberties.

Table 10: Political Participation
(percent during past year)

	2000	*2001*
Attended community meeting	45	52
Got together with others to raise an issue	54	52
Attended demonstration or protest march	7	15
Used force or violence for a political cause	n/a	6

Not surprisingly, there is a clear association at the individual level between interest and participation, illustrated in Figure 8. When we compare people who express no interest in public affairs with those who are very interested, we find that politically engaged Nigerians are twice as likely to attend regular community meetings, nearly three times as likely to meet frequently with others on an issue of concern, and five times as likely to participate often in peaceful demonstrations.

Figure 8: Political Interest and Participation



Although people infrequently turn to violent forms of participation, there are pockets of tolerance for political violence. Just 6 percent of those interviewed admit to ever using force for a political cause, and only 4 percent say they have done so more than once.[10] Another 11 percent, however, concede that they might use violent means if given the opportunity. Furthermore (see Table 11), some 28 percent believe that use of violence may at times be justified in Nigerian politics, a marginal increase from the earlier survey. While a majority of Nigerians reject political violence, a substantial enough segment is willing to countenance violence to have destabilizing effect. Recent conflicts in Kano, Jos, Kaduna, Tiv-Jukun, Lagos, Aba, Bayelsa and Delta states, Ife-Modakeke, Sagamu, Osun, and other locales show the unsettling and destructive impact of a violent minority.[11]

[10] Since respondents might understandably be reluctant to admit to violent conduct, the prevalence of violence is probably under-reported.

[11] Attitudes toward political violence vary among regions, as southerners are more likely than northerners to tolerate violent action (35 to 27 percent). Other characteristics such as age, education, or religion do not significantly affect views regarding violence.

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Table 11: Violence and Politics

	2000	*2001*
The use of violence is never justified in Nigerian politics *(% agree)*	69	64
In this country, it is sometimes necessary to use violence in support of a just cause *(% agree)*	26	28

Political Efficacy

The essence of democracy is political accountability, and citizens are more likely to become invested in the system when they believe that they can meaningfully engage in the political process. Alongside indications that the popular sense of political efficacy has risen since the transition to democracy, there are troubling signs that many Nigerians remain intimidated by public affairs, dubious of government's responsiveness, and distant from their elected representatives.

Although there is widespread political interest and access to information, Nigerians remain daunted by the nation's politics. Table 12 shows that more than two-thirds find politics and government too complicated to follow, and only 15 percent (half the proportion of the previous survey) express confidence in their grasp of political affairs. Nonetheless, people are less diffident about their opinions: 44 percent believe that friends and neighbors listen to their political opinions, more than twice the proportion found in the early months of democratic government.

Table 12: Political Efficacy

	2000	*2001*
Politics and government are too complicated to understand *(% agree)*	68	68
(% disagree)	27	15
Friends and neighbors listen to your political views *(% agree)*	20	44
Ordinary people can influence government *(% saying better now than under military rule)*	66	60
If you had to, you could get together with others to make elected representatives listen to your concerns *(% agree)*	49	55

Citizens also display ambivalence about their ability to affect government. The proportion who believes that "ordinary people can influence what the government does" has declined since the previous survey. Yet there is also a modest increase in the number of people who believe they can effectively bring their concerns to elected representatives.

Even though many Nigerians may be sure of their ability to plead their interests, they do not hold much confidence in the motives of elected leaders. When asked how much time their representatives spend looking after their interests (seen in Table 13) 44 percent respond "never." Even more believe that politicians spend no time listening to their concerns. Only about 10 percent of the Nigerians interviewed believe that elected leaders spend a good deal of time listening and responding to the interests of the electorate.

Table 13: Views of Elected Leaders
(percent)

	Often/ Always	*Seldom/ Never*
(How much of the time do you think elected leaders try their best): To look after the interests of people like you?	12	86
To listen to what people like you have to say?	10	88

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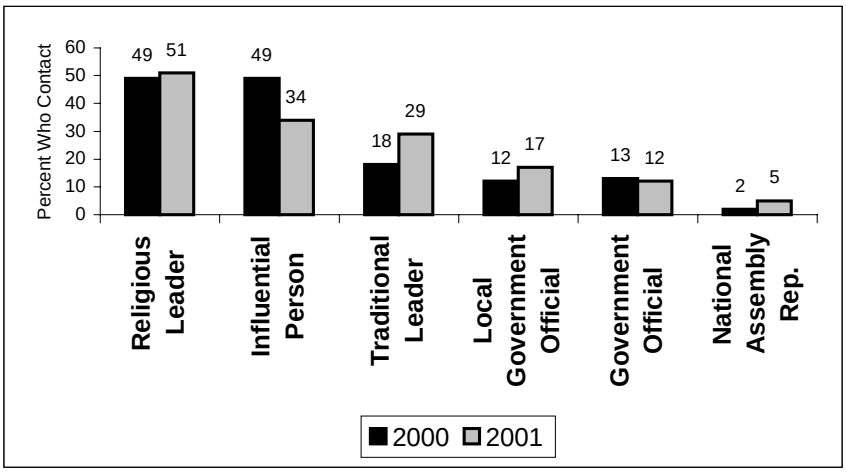
Representation Strategies

The skepticism toward politicians is reflected in the *representation strategies* of Nigerians – the people they turn to for help with problems or concerns. This is illustrated in Figure 9. Citizens report slightly more contact with elected representatives since the political transition, but our main observation is that people rarely look to politicians or government officials for assistance. Only 5 percent have ever contacted their National Assembly representative, and 17 percent have had contact with Local Government representatives, who might be expected to attract more interaction. Little more than one-tenth have ever contacted another type of government official. Generally speaking, Nigerians turn first to religious leaders for help with their problems, and then to traditional rulers or other influential persons. Political leaders and representatives of the state remain relatively distant from most citizens.

Figure 9: Representation Strategies



One reason that people may be hesitant to contact their elected representatives (apart from the obvious question of whether politicians are available to voters) is the degree of ambivalence about the role of democratic leaders. When asked to describe the roles of National Assembly members, the most common answer is that they should "deliver development." The next most frequent answer is to "represent the people," followed by "making laws" and then "listen to the people." Two of these answers (deliver development, make laws) emphasize a top-down role, and a distance from average constituents. The other responses (represent the people, listen to the people) stress the importance of accountable and responsive leadership.

There is also a tension between the view that citizens should be critically engaged, as against the view that the government should be a benevolent provider for the people. Much of the public maintains a critical stance toward their leaders. As seen in Table 14, almost three-fourths agree that citizens should actively question leaders, while about one-fifth believe that Nigerians should defer more to authority.

Table 14: Attitudes Toward Government Authority
(percent agreeing with each statement)

	2000	2001
As citizens, we should be more active in questioning the actions of our leaders	70	74
In our country these days, there is not enough respect for authority	28	22
People are like children; government should take care of them like a father	n/a	61
Government is an employee; the people are the boss of the government	n/a	34
It is better to have wealthy people as leaders, because they can help provide for the community	n/a	26
It is better to have ordinary people as leaders because they understand our needs	n/a	66

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These views are, however, offset by a deferential conception of government among many citizens. The survey posed different images of the relation between citizens and government: should the people be seen as "children" with the government acting as a "father," or should we see the people as "boss" and the government as the "employee"? A significant majority (61 percent) accepts a patriarchal image of government, with only 35 percent asserting the sovereignty of citizens. This would suggest that many Nigerians see the government as a patron or guide, rather than a representative of the popular will.

Yet this view does not extend to the conception of leadership. Two-thirds believe in government by ordinary people who can understand their needs, while only about a quarter favor rule by wealthy leaders who can serve as patrons to the community.

A Crisis of Legitimacy?

Political attitudes have changed substantially in the period since the transition to democracy. A key issue is whether the decline in both preference for and satisfaction with democracy signals a critical loss of support for democracy in Nigeria. Does this suggest a crisis of legitimacy for the new system? Are Nigerians ready to accept alternatives to democratic rule?

These questions are especially relevant in light of Nigeria's troubled political history. We do not have survey data from previous regimes, yet we know that the failure of democracy under the First and Second Republics was in each instance accompanied by a loss of popular legitimacy, and a willingness by much of the Nigerian public to accept military intervention. A finding of low public confidence in the regime could be cause for concern over the stability of Nigerian democracy.

In order to better understand the problems of democratic performance and legitimacy, we emphasize an important distinction: between the *regime* of democracy, that is democracy as a general political system; the *government in power*, including elected officials, appointees and leading political parties; and the Nigerian *state*, which includes such permanent institutions as the army, the police, and the courts, as well as general administration and the delivery of services.

These three dimensions – regime, government, and state – are not identical, and it is important to be clear about what we are measuring when we discuss citizens' views. Consider this scenario: people may be unhappy with the performance of the government of the day without blaming the regime of democracy. Indeed, they can turn to the democratic process (notably the ballot box) to change leaders and seek better performance. There is, however, another possibility: poor performance by leaders or chronic failures of the state may erode confidence in the democratic system, leading the public to embrace non-democratic alternatives.

At present, we do not see a legitimacy crisis for the new regime. Nigerians view their government more critically, and they are coming to terms with a host of political and economic problems under the new political dispensation. Appraisals of government performance have declined substantially. Much of the public views their elected representatives as distant and self-interested. Major policy concerns, especially in the area of economic recovery, are not being adequately addressed by government. Public trust in major state institutions has also waned. Nigerians have diminishing confidence in the legislature and electoral authorities, and they show little faith in the constitution.

At the same time as they are losing confidence in the government and the state, a large majority of Nigerians continues to prefer democracy, both ideally and as the country's only viable political alternative. Citizens largely reject a return of military rule, a restriction of party competition or an excessively strong president. Furthermore, democratic values are quite prevalent. Nigerians value free speech and political equality, and they are substantially opposed to the use of violence in political life (notwithstanding a significant minority willing to tolerate violent action)

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The public displays some ambivalence about standards of participation and representation. There is a growing interest in politics and public affairs, and people take advantage of different sources of information. Yet a large proportion also finds politics to be bewildering, and many subscribe to a paternalistic view of government. Nigerians are politically engaged, though they do not fully accept the role of critical citizens (Norris 1999).

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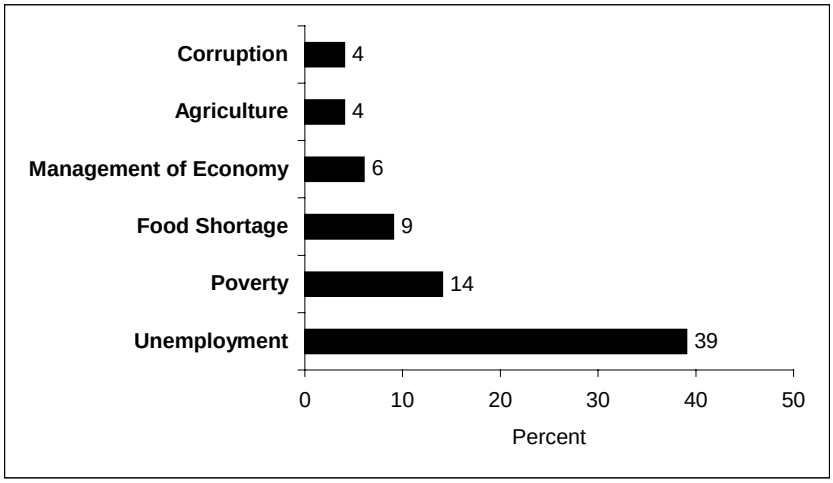
IV. ATTITUDES TOWARD THE ECONOMY

Nigeria is burdened by a troubled economic legacy. Economic performance has been poor for much of the past two decades. Successive governments have mismanaged the economy, pervasive corruption has squandered precious resources, and unstable global markets for oil create economic uncertainty. The reform experience under the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) was highly controversial, as economic recovery did not materialize and many Nigerians believe there was a great deal of inequity in the burdens of austerity. The deterioration of major economic institutions and infrastructure over a period of years has aggravated the problem. There has been scant economic improvement since the political transition in 1999.

One important question arising from these conditions is whether poor economic performance will have a significant impact on democratic legitimacy. A second issue is the relation between political and economic choices. The democratic spirit in Nigeria does not necessarily correspond to a desire for market reforms. The values and preferences of citizens under the new political system will have an important effect on the direction of economic change and the viability of particular policies or programs.

Economic concerns are a priority for many Nigerians. In the most recent survey we asked an open-ended question about the country's leading problems. The top four problems mentioned were, in order of priority (Figure 10): unemployment, poverty, food shortage, and management of the economy. Clearly the economy presents urgent challenges for the new government. There is not a public consensus, however, on economic affairs. In contrast to political attitudes, where we find a relatively strong and consistent preference for democracy, Nigerians are ambivalent and often divided in their opinions of markets, the role of government, and the direction of economic reform.

Figure 10: Nigeria's Leading Problems: The Public's View
(percent identifying this as a problem)



Economic Satisfaction

The public has mixed views about the condition of the national economy. As seen in Table 15, somewhat less than half currently approve of the country's present economic conditions, a slight increase from the previous survey. They outnumber those who view economic conditions as bad by a small margin. Only one-third, however, believe the economy has improved within the past year. The government's handling of the economy gets mixed ratings from the public. As we have noted (see Figure 2), evaluations have declined regarding the government's handling of some major economic concerns. A majority of Nigerians believe the government is not adequately addressing the key

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problems of joblessness, poverty, inequality, food security and inflation. Nonetheless, there is a modestly positive assessment of the government's overall management of the economy: 55 percent offer a favorable view of the government's general economic management, while 43 percent provide a negative assessment.

Table 15: Economic Satisfaction

	2000[12]	*2001*
Country's Current Economic Condition (% good)	45	48
(% bad)	n/a	43
Economic conditions compared with 12 months ago (% better)	n/a	33
Expected conditions 12 months from now (% better)	n/a	79
Government's management of the economy (% good)	n/a	55

The 2001 survey also asked for comparisons of current economic conditions with those under previous regimes. When weighed against circumstances a few years ago, people see modest improvements in the availability of goods, respect for property rights, and general living standards. Many people recognize progress in the government's delivery of essential services. At the same time, a substantial proportion of Nigerians see deterioration in job opportunities, and a majority believe that gaps between rich and poor have worsened in recent years. In spite of these severe assessments, Nigerians retain considerable optimism about the economy, as eight out of ten expect better prospects for the next year.

Table 16: Current Economic Conditions Compared with Previous Regimes

	% better	*% worse*
Availability of goods	46	34
Security of property from government seizure	46	25
People's standard of living	43	39
Effective delivery of services	56	18
Job opportunities	37	42
Gap between rich and poor	24	55

Personal Well-Being

Turning from the national economy to the level of personal welfare, the survey reflects the difficult economic circumstances for many Nigerians. Seen generally (Table 17), respondents in the latest study have a median income of less than 4000 Nigerian Naira (₦) per month (about US$400 annually), and one in five reports they are unwillingly jobless (i.e., actively seeking employment).[13] At the individual level, a greater proportion reports shortages of food, clean water, and healthcare.[14] We also find a growing reliance on kin for these critical needs, suggesting further deficiencies in markets and government services.

[12] The question on economic satisfaction was posed somewhat differently in 2000 and 2001. In the first survey, respondents were asked whether they were satisfied or dissatisfied with the condition of the national economy, with no option for indifference. In the latter survey, the question asked whether they would evaluate the economy as relatively good, bad, or neither.

[13] In all, 58 percent of those interviewed in 2001 did not have an income-generating job. Some of these people were students, household dependents (e.g., elderly family members), housewives, or subsistence farmers. In fact, more than half of those interviewed indicate they spend some time each day growing their own food. But even with such qualifications, this indicates a high level of joblessness.

[14] These results should be interpreted with caution. Rather than indicating a deterioration of conditions throughout the country, this may reflect the different composition of the rural sample in 2001, which included a greater proportion of small villages and remote settlements.

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Table 17: Personal Economic Circumstances

	2000	*2001*
Median income	₦1,001-5,000 per mo.[15]	₦2,001-4,000 per mo.
Unemployment – currently without job but actively looking (%)	n/a	20
Have you ever gone without:		
Enough food? (% ever)	41	49
Clean water? (% ever)	57	67
Health care? (% ever)	36	69
To whom do you turn for help with:		
Food shortage (% answering kin)	15	28
Clean water (% kin)	5	8
Health care (% kin)	10	14

Not all signs point to worsening conditions, however. In contrast to these somber appraisals of the country's general economic performance, many Nigerians continue to evaluate their personal living conditions favorably: Table 18 shows that a majority offer a positive assessment of their own circumstances. With regard to personal financial circumstances, seven in ten respondents broke even or saved money in the past year, and a larger proportion reported building savings.

Table 18: Personal Circumstances Over Time

	2000	*2001*
Current personal economic circumstances (% good)	58	61
Current financial condition (% save money/break even)	73	71
(of which: % save money)	21	37
Personal economic circumstances 12 months ago (% better now)	68	56
Expected circumstances 12 months from now (% better)	86	79

Most people continue to hold favorable estimations of their personal prospects over time, although the current view is less buoyant than in the early months after the end of military rule. Fewer people believe their conditions have improved within the past year, and a slightly reduced majority expects improvements over the next year. The public, while still upbeat, has moderated their assessments of economic betterment.

Views on poverty offer further insight into the economic conditions and expectations of Nigerians. When asked to define poverty ("What does it mean to be poor?"), the most common responses include shortages of food, income, jobs, shelter, and clothing, or simply low standards of living. On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is "poor" and 10 "rich", Nigerians rank themselves with a mean of 4.9, as shown in Figure 11. When asked to consider their parents' position, the mean response is somewhat higher, suggesting that many Nigerians perceive a decline in well-being from the previous generation. When contemplating their children's prospects, however, optimism reigns: the mean expectation is 9.1. In fact, nearly two-thirds of those we surveyed expect their children's standard of living to be ranked "10"![16] This is evidently a reflection of the widespread value in Nigeria that people should wish the best for the next generation.

[15] Different income categories were used in the 2000 and 2001 surveys.

[16] The interpretation of such scales by respondents is always subjective. It is possible that many people could view a maximum rating as an indication that the next generation will be relatively better off, rather than wealthy in an absolute sense.

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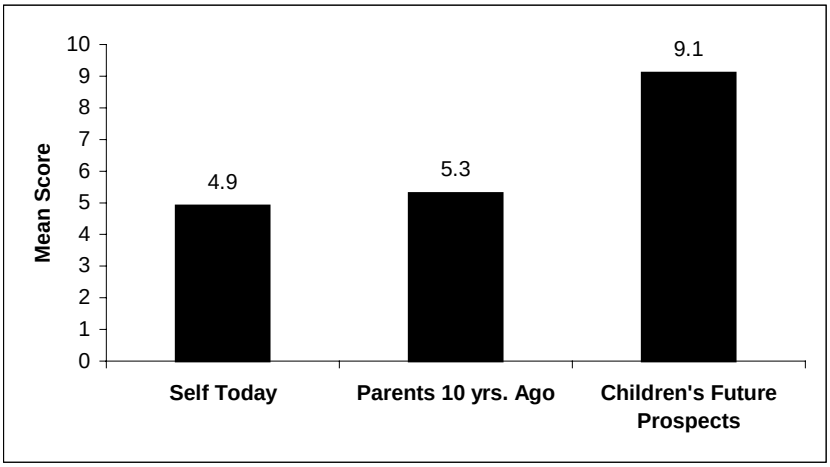
Figure 11: Subjective Views of Living Standards Over Time
(0=poor; 10=rich)



Variations in Economic Satisfaction

Nigerians from various backgrounds hold different perspectives on economic conditions. People assess the national economy and their personal circumstances differently according to their education, urban or rural residence, and region. Age and gender, on the other hand, do not significantly affect these views.[17] Table 19 shows some evaluations of the country's economy. Relatively positive assessments are offered by less-educated Nigerians, those in the rural areas, and residents of the northern states. Southerners, urbanites and the educated elite are more critical of the nation's economic performance.

Table 19: Different Assessments of Economic Conditions
(percent good)

	Country's Conditions	*Personal Circumstances*
By Education		
Primary only	49	55
Post-secondary	44	66
By Residence		
Rural	54	56
Urban	43	65
By Region		
North	63	66
South	34	56

Turning to personal economic conditions, the pattern is quite different. Not surprisingly, urban dwellers and those with higher education report better economic circumstances. This accords with the self-assessment of poverty (Table 20), where the mean scores for educated and urban groups are consistently greater than those for less educated or rural individuals. We also note the seeming anomaly that more northerners offer a positive assessment of their personal circumstances than southerners, even though northerners' own subjective ratings of their living standards on the 0 to 10 scale place them slightly below southerners. It is probable that the basis of comparison differs among rural residents in more homogenous villages, people in urban settings, or those in villages with greater economic disparities.

[17] Distinctions among gender groups and age categories (under 30; 31 and older) were statistically insignificant.

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Table 20: Subjective Views of Poverty
(self-assessment based on the scale 0=poor, 10=rich)

	Mean Score
By Education	
Primary only	4.5
Post-secondary	5.3
By Residence	
Rural	4.6
Urban	5.3
By Region	
North	4.8
South	5.0

These results raise an interesting question. Why should it be the case that Nigerians who subjectively rate themselves as better off (those who are educated, urban and – on the poverty dimension – southerners) hold a more critical view of the nation's economy. It is likely that these groups have better access to information that reflects on the economy and public policy. Furthermore, the effects of economic crisis and government austerity are felt more acutely among those who depend on formal sector employment. While those in the urbanized south have attained relatively better personal circumstances, they are also more vulnerable to economic volatility, more attentive to the government's management of the economy, and therefore more critical of economic conditions.

Attitudes Toward Government and Markets

While Nigerians reveal some consensus about the best direction for their political system, they are more divided over the shape that the economy should take. Table 21 illustrates the point: while 71 percent favor a democratic regime, only a slight majority prefers a market economy. More than one-quarter subscribe to a state-run economy, and the balance is indifferent. The ambivalent views toward markets are reflected in a number of areas. Nigerians often express a sense of autonomy, individual initiative, and desire for the freedoms of the marketplace. At the same time many would prefer an assertive role for the state in providing basic needs, insuring welfare, and smoothing uncertainties.

Table 21: Preferences for Democracy and Markets

	%	*%*	
Prefer democracy	71	54	Prefer market economy
Non-democratic regime alright	15	27	Prefer non-market economy
Political system doesn't matter	12	16	Economic system doesn't matter

The answers to surveys often depend on how the questions are asked, and this is nowhere more apparent than in the recent Afrobarometer questions on alternative images of the economy. Table 22 provides a good example. When asked whether "government should plan the production and distribution of all goods and services," responses are evenly divided: almost equal proportions approve or reject this "statist" perspective, and the poles of opinion (strongly agree/strongly disagree) are identical. On the other hand, when people are offered a market vision that is diametrically opposite – "individuals [should] decide for themselves what to produce and what to buy and sell" – two-thirds endorse this view (26 percent strongly).

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Table 22: Views on the Form of the Economy

	% approve	*of which: % approve strongly*
Government plans production and distribution of goods and services	43	16
Individuals decide for themselves what to produce and what to buy and sell	65	26

Market values are confirmed in other areas as well. As Table 23 shows, a majority of people favors the pursuit of individual interest rather than emphasizing community well-being. A substantial proportion responds favorably to the idea of economic autonomy in going "back to the land" to provide for community needs. The public is adamantly opposed to government violations of private property rights. With regard to an important policy area, the provision of education, two-thirds of those interviewed accept user fees for schooling if it is linked to improved standards. Furthermore, there is an implicit acceptance of free labor markets, as the great majority believes in higher employment (even at low wages) rather than wage supports or restrictions on employment.

Table 23: Market Values

	% agree
Each person should put the well-being of the community ahead of his own interests.	43
Everybody should be free to pursue what is best for themselves as individuals.	53
People [should] go back to the land and provide mainly for their own needs as a community. *(% who approve of this idea)*	60
Government must abide by the law in acquiring property, including paying the owners.	85
Government should have the power to seize property without compensation.	12
Better to have free schooling, even if the quality of education is low.	30
Better to raise educational standards, even with school fees.	67
Better for everyone to have a job, even if wages are low.	84
Better to have higher wages, even if some go without a job.	13

There are widespread popular concerns, however, over the volatility and insecurity of an unfettered market economy. As seen in Table 24, six out of ten respondents believe that economic well-being is primarily the responsibility of government rather than individuals, and nearly the same margin prefers to avoid income gaps rather than reward personal initiative. On both these questions, the proportion offering a market-oriented response has declined from the initial survey.

A paternalistic image of the state has already been seen in the prevalent view (61 percent, see Table14) that the government should be seen as a "father" to the people. There is also a sentiment, although less pronounced, that favors economic tutelage by elites. A plurality prefer an economy managed by experts, and an economy in which wealthy Nigerians provide for community needs. In some particular areas, suspicion of markets is widespread. For example, on balance, more Nigerians would prefer to see the government rather than private traders handle agricultural marketing.

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Table 24: The Role of Government and Markets
(percent agreeing with statement)

People should look after themselves and be responsible for their own success in life.	39
Government should bear the main responsibility for the well-being of the people.	58
It is alright to have differences in wealth, because those who work hard should be rewarded.	37
We should avoid large gaps between rich and poor.	58
Better for traders to handle agricultural marketing.	45
Better for government to buy and sell crops.	48
Economic scenarios: ***(% approving each)***	
Economic experts (including foreign donors and investors) make the most important decisions about the economy.	44
Wealthy Nigerians provide for the needs of their own communities.	45

While Nigerians value individual choice and market freedoms, they also believe that government should furnish stability, encourage equity, and guarantee popular welfare. In part, these are general expectations of government in many countries around the world. In Nigeria, the legacy of the oil boom and the dramatic growth of state activities since the 1970s has also heightened popular expectations of the government and enhanced the role of the public sector in economic affairs.

Views of Reform

Similarly, Nigerians are ambivalent about the course of economic reform. Many are dissatisfied with the record of economic policy, as nearly three-quarters believe that the government's reform program has been detrimental to most people. Nigerians strongly believe that the burdens of economic reform have been unfairly distributed, a view that echoes the previously-discussed concerns that income gaps are widening and that the government has failed to provide for more equitable development.

A majority of those interviewed in both surveys disapprove of reform measures such as public sector cutbacks, privatization of state enterprise, and trade liberalization. As seen in Table 25, a growing proportion of Nigerians is opposed to laying off civil servants. In the most recent survey, eight out of ten believe they should be retained, a figure that has risen by more than ten percentage points since January 2000. It is also noteworthy that 36 percent of those interviewed say they rely at least partly on the salary of a government worker. Views on government layoffs, however, are not affected by financial dependence – there is no significant difference of opinion on this issue between those who rely on public employment and those who do not.

Table 25: Views on Economic Reform
(percent agreeing with each statement)

	2000	*2001*
Government's economic policies have hurt most people and only benefited a few.	60	72
All civil servants should keep their jobs, even if paying salaries is costly to the country.	72	83
Government should retain ownership of its factories, businesses and farms.	60	n/a
Favor importing affordable goods from other countries.	n/a	36
Favor protecting domestic producers through tariffs.	n/a	56
Satisfied with government policy to reduce its role in the economy. *(% satisfied)*	n/a	51
The costs of reforming the economy are too high; government should abandon its policies.	49	27
In order for the economy to get better, necessary to accept hardships now.	45	65

Privatization has attained growing prominence as an economic policy issue since the transition to democracy. The latest survey did not include questions regarding privatization, but we recall that 60 percent of those surveyed in 2000 disapproved of the sale of government enterprises and properties. Trade liberalization is another measure that was central to the SAP and has been continual feature of government policy since the late 1980s. Much of the public is unhappy with liberalization: a

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majority (57 percent) favors protection for domestic producers, while only 36 percent approves the open importation of foreign goods.

In other respects, however, there is a measure of public acceptance for economic reform and a willingness to persevere with difficult economic policies. For instance, about half the respondents in the latest survey express satisfaction with the government's efforts to reduce its role in the economy. We also find evidence of increasing patience with the pace of economic change. In the recent survey, two-thirds agree that it is necessary to accept hardships now in order for the economy to improve, while a little more than one-quarter believe the government should abandon its present policies. The proportion expressing patience with reform has jumped substantially since the initial survey. These views, of course, are subject to frequent change according to prevailing conditions. Yet there are signs that the public is not deeply discouraged by the difficulties of economic change under the democratic system.

Democracy and Economic Performance

Economic difficulties pose challenges for the new regime. Widespread poverty, shortcomings in the provision of goods and services, and a halting course of economic recovery are cited as problems by a majority of citizens. Many Nigerians also perceive growing inequality, an especially disturbing trend when we recall the disparities and social resentments that were prominent during the latter years of the Second Republic. Economic frustration could be corrosive for democratic legitimacy.

Perceptions of economic conditions influence the way citizens evaluate democracy. Table 26 shows that people who are content with the current condition of the economy, and with their personal economic circumstances, are substantially more satisfied with the democratic system. In addition, future economic expectations shape democratic satisfaction. People who are relatively pessimistic about the national economy, or their own conditions, are less satisfied with the regime. Furthermore, concerns about equity also influence these appraisals: those who perceive a worsening gap between rich and poor are considerably less satisfied with democracy in Nigeria today.

Table 26: Economic Evaluations and Satisfaction with Democracy

	% Satisfied with Democracy	
Economic Conditions:	*Good*	*Bad*
Country's economy	74	42
Personal living conditions	67	42
Gap between rich and poor:	*Better*	*Worse*
	76	50
Personal hardships:	*Never*	*Frequently*
Food shortages	65	45
Income shortages	60	60

Another approach is to consider the effects of economic deprivation on political contentment. We selected two measures of deprivation, adequate food supply and sufficient income. People who experience frequent shortages of food are dissatisfied with democracy; the distribution of attitudes is comparable to those who are unhappy with the general state of the economy or their personal living conditions.

Income, however, is not a significant guide to relative political satisfaction. Nigerians who report frequent income shortfalls are just as satisfied with the political system as those with sufficient resources. The poor are no more discouraged with the democratic regime than their more fortunate compatriots.

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Economic satisfaction strongly influences how Nigerians appraise the extent of democratization. As seen in Table 27 those with negative assessments of the economy are far more likely to view the system as a democracy with major problems, and much less inclined to rate Nigeria as a full democracy. (For those unhappy with their present living conditions, these attitudes are comparable). When we consider expectations of national and individual prospects, the results are similar.

Many people look to the democratic system as a means of attaining greater equality, so it is not surprising that concerns about social gaps have a substantial influence on how people regard the degree of political change since 1999. Among those who perceive a worsening divide between rich and poor, a majority regards the country as a severely troubled democracy, and only 7 percent label it a full democracy.

Table 27: Economic Evaluations and Extent of Democracy

		% Democracy with major problems	*% Full democracy*
Present conditions of country's economy	Good	39	13
	Bad	55	6
Future expectations of country's economy	Better	45	10
	Worse	54	5
Gap between rich and poor	Better	31	16
	Worse	54	7

We have seen that Nigerians value democracy for different reasons. Some place emphasis on the enhancement of political rights and liberties, while other expect economic benefits from the system. Since views on economic performance influence popular satisfaction with the democratic regime, we might also expect that economic contentment would affect the public's patience with democracy. We assessed this relationship by comparing the various measures of economic satisfaction with responses to the question on political patience ("Our present system of elected government should be given more time to deal with inherited problems" versus "If our present system cannot produce results soon, we should try another form of government."). In fact, we find these effects to be limited.

Levels of current satisfaction with the national economy, or with personal living standards, do not significantly affect patience with democracy. About three-fourths of those interviewed express patience with the current system, regardless of how they evaluate national economic circumstances. Nor does personal economic deprivation erode patience. In their degree of patience with democracy, those who suffer frequent shortages of food or income are virtually identical to those with no such hardships. Furthermore, perceptions of income inequality show no effect on relative forbearance with the regime.

Political patience is, however, related to expectations regarding the economy, as seen in Table 28. Those who anticipate a declining national economy or worsening personal circumstances are less patient with democracy and more willing to contemplate alternatives to democratic rule.

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Table 28: Economic Expectations and Patience with Democracy

		Patient with democracy (%)	*Try another form of govt. (%)*
Future expectations of country's economy	Better	76	24
	Worse	68	32
Future expectations of personal circumstances	Better	76	24
	Worse	66	34

Democracy, Markets and Reform

What is the relationship between attitudes toward democracy, views of markets and preferences for economic reform? One view suggests that political and economic liberalism are related: an attachment to democracy is often accompanied by a preference for economic freedom. Alternatively, people may hold different values in the political and economic spheres. Not all democracies are identical in their institutions and political standards, and market economies differ as well. There may be very different preferences for the mix of state intervention and competitive markets in particular economies. Furthermore, democratic politics often raise expectations of economic equality and provisions for public welfare. Pressures for the alleviation of poverty and the enhancement of public services are evident in the political arena.

Preferences for democracy and markets vary among the Nigerian public. We can clarify these views by comparing the responses to two general questions on preferences for democracy and for a market economy. Table 29 shows four modes of opinion: "market democrats," or those who have a preference both for democracy as a political system and for a market-oriented economy, represent 46 percent of those interviewed in the latest survey. Another 27 percent can be categorized as "non-market democrats," partial to democracy but not attached to a market economy. A minority of 17 percent is averse to both democracy and markets, while one in ten prefers markets but eschews democracy. While market preferences are associated with democratic leanings more often than any other association, this combination of values is held by fewer than half of Nigerians.

Table 29: Association of Democratic and Market Preferences

	Prefer Democracy	**Non-democratic preference**
Prefer market economy	46% "Market democrats"	10% "Non-democratic marketeers"
Non-market preference	27% "Non-market democrats"	17% "Non-democratic, non-marketeers"

These values are ordered in a particular way. Free-marketeers are democrats, but democrats are not necessarily free-marketeers. As seen in Table 30, among those who prefer a market economy above any alternative, 82 percent also choose a democratic system of government. Yet, for those who value democratic government, a much lower proportion favors a market economy. We have seen that democratic preferences are more widespread among Nigerians than market values, and it is evident that many people who support the regime of democracy consider a mixed or state-run economy to be an appropriate choice.

Table 30: Democratic and Market Values

Prefer Market Economy *(% who also prefer democracy)*	Prefer Democracy *(% who also prefer market economy)*
82	62

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These general views toward democracy and markets do not necessarily translate into attitudes toward economic reform. When democratic preferences are measured against perspectives on economic policy change, in Table 31, we find weak relationships. Those who prefer democracy are slightly more likely than others to approve of the government's efforts to reduce its role in the economy, though they are also more inclined to see the government's economic policies as inequitable. Attitudes toward democracy have no influence on patience with economic reform.

Table 31: Democratic Preferences and Attitudes Toward Economic Reform

	Prefer Democracy	Non-Democratic Preference
Satisfied with government's reduced economic role (%)	53	48
Economic policies have hurt most people, helped few (%)	74	68
In order for economy to improve, accept hardships now (%)	66	66

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V. THE RULE OF LAW

The rule of law constitutes an essential factor in building Nigeria's new democracy. Crime, social violence and corruption frequently have negative impacts on the lives of Nigerians. And the state's ability to provide law and order and ensure the fair administration of justice form important criteria of political performance. The Afrobarometer seeks to measure the public's perceptions of crime and conflict, their evaluation of government efforts to solve these problems, and the performance of central institutions. Overall, we wish to establish how these concerns, and the related issue of corruption, affect popular perceptions of democratic legitimacy.

Crime and Social Conflict

High rates of crime, especially violent crime, have been evident in Nigeria in recent times. Palpable fear and widespread concern among the general public is related to the high incidence of injury and mortality associated with crime. For instance, officials say that in just the last four months of 2000, armed robbers killed 134 civilian victims and 26 police officers, while police killed 348 suspects. These figures hint at the magnitude of the problem. As seen in Table 32, nearly two-fifths of the respondents in the 2001 Afrobarometer survey report that they sometimes feel unsafe in their own homes. Moreover, in 2001, increased percentages report that they or their families have been victims of burglary or physical assault. Indeed, while one in five Nigerians reported such personal experience of crime in 2000, the latest survey indicates that nearly one-quarter of the public has been victimized.

Table 32: Perceptions of Crime and Personal Security

	2000	*2001*
Ever felt unsafe in your own home? *(% who have felt unsafe)*	n/a	38
Home ever broken into or robbed? *(% yes)*	20	25
You or family ever physically attacked? *(% yes)*	19	24
How well is government handling crime? *(% well)*	62	57
Democratic vs. military govt.: safety from crime/violence		
(% saying democratic govt. is better)	59	55
(% saying democratic govt. is worse)	16	18
Democratic vs. military govt.: ability to enforce the law		
(% saying democratic govt. is better)	n/a	48
(% saying democratic govt. is worse)		28

Nigerians are clearly ambivalent about the government's performance in handling crime. Overall, 57 percent of those surveyed in 2001 feel the administration is handling the problem of crime well, a slight decline from 18 months earlier. Somewhat more than half believe that safety from crime and violence is better under the present regime than under its predecessor, and 48 percent think that the current government is better able to enforce the law than the previous military administration. For each of these questions, only a minority believes that performance has deteriorated under democratic rule.

Social violence, especially of a communal nature, has also become widespread under the present regime. Old and new grievances have been brought to the fore, frequently involving force and conflict. There are many dimensions to such instability, including the introduction of Sharia law in some northern states and the religious tensions that have accompanied these measures; the emergence of vigilante groups supported by some state governments (e.g., the Bakasi Boys in the southeastern states, especially Anambra); the rise of ethnic militias (such as Egbesu among the Ijaws in South South, the Urhobo and Itsekiri youth groups in Delta State, and Odu'a People's Congress in South West); and inter-ethnic conflicts in the North West (Kaduna and Kano States), North Central (Taraba, Benue, Nasarawa and Plateau) and in Bauchi State (Tafawa Balewa Local Government Area). These developments have often led to large-scale violence, including the deaths of thousands of people.

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Table 33: Perceptions of Social Violence and Conflict

Ever experienced violent conflicts within your community? *(% yes)*	73
(of which: % often/always)	40
Violent conflicts between groups in this country? *(% yes)*	86
(of which: % often/always)	35
Main causes of social conflict? *(selected responses, %)*	
Boundary or land disputes	27
Religion	26
Ethnic or tribal differences	13
Political party disputes	7
Economic problems	6
Natural resources	5
Political leadership disputes	5
How well is the government handling conflict resolution?	
(% saying well)	61
(% saying poorly)	37
Who would you turn to for help to resolve conflict between groups? *(selected responses, %)*	
Traditional leaders/elders	23
Armed forces/police	16
Religious leader/organization	13
People involved in the conflict	12
Family/friends/neighbors	11
Government agencies	5
Federal Government	0.5
Vigilantes	0.2

The prevalence of social violence is highlighted by the 2001 Afrobarometer survey, as seen in Table 33. Nearly three-quarters of respondents have experienced violent conflicts in their own communities (40 percent frequently), and almost nine out of ten Nigerians recognize social conflicts in the country at large, with more than one-third perceiving this as a common problem. There are different views as to the sources of these conflicts. The causes mentioned most frequently are local issues such as land and boundary disputes, which are evident in such conflicts as Tiv-Jukun, Ife-Modakeke, and clashes among the Ijaw and Itsekiri. Many people also point to religious differences (prominent in Kaduna, Kano and Jos) and ethnic or tribal tensions (especially influential in Lagos, Aba, Kaduna and Sagamu) as important causes of social conflict.

A solid majority of respondents believes the government is doing a good job of managing conflict resolution, while 37 percent feel that conflicts are not being handled well. In seeking to resolve violent conflicts, Nigerians often prefer to resort to resources outside of the government. When asked whom they would turn to for the resolution of such disputes, people most frequently mention local mediators such as traditional rulers or elders. The next most common response (by 16 percent of respondents) is the army or the police. Despite the controversial record of police and military intervention in social conflicts (notably the recent incidents in Benue State and the village of Odi in Bayelsa State), a small though significant portion of the public still views the public security forces as useful agents of conflict resolution.

However, many respondents mention other private actors such as religious leaders, family and neighbors, or the parties to the conflict, about as frequently as the state security agencies. In general, only about one-quarter of those interviewed prefer any type of government authorities for resolving conflicts, while more than half would turn to community figures or the disputants themselves.

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Institutions, Law and Order

The low degree of public confidence in the public security agencies leads us to consider a broader problem in the capacity of government to ensure law and order. The police and judiciary are critical to the observance of the rule of law. Yet as shown in Table 34, a significant majority of Nigerians express no trust at all in the police, while only 11 percent have substantial trust. Almost unanimously, Nigerians believe that the police are corrupt: 95 percent perceive some degree of corruption, and two out of three view the problem as widespread. Nearly half of those surveyed say that it is difficult to obtain needed help from the police, while about 40 percent say they do not even try. Nonetheless, three out of four respondents agree that "the police always have the right to make people obey the law," indicating a significant degree of legitimacy for law enforcement authorities.

Table 34: Police and Law Enforcement

How much do you trust the police? (%)	
Not at all	58
A little	30
Quite a lot	8
A lot	3
How many of the police do you think are involved in corruption?	
(% saying some/most/all)	95
(of which: % saying most or all)	66
How easy or difficult is it to obtain needed help from the police?	
(% saying difficult)	46
(% who never try)	39
"The police always have the right to make people obey the law"	
(% agree)	75
If you committed a crime, how likely is it that authorities could enforce the law?	
(% saying likely/very likely)	82
If you were victim of a violent crime would you turn to the police or take revenge?	
(% turn to police)	76
(% take revenge)	18

This is offset, however, by a widespread belief in the effectiveness of law enforcement (Table 34). In fact, 82 percent of those surveyed believe that if they were to commit a serious crime, the authorities could enforce the law. This may account for the limited sentiment among the public for self-help when dealing with crime: fully 76 percent say they would turn to the police if they were victims of violent crime, while only 18 percent admit they would directly seek revenge. These findings in 2001 reinforce the results of the earlier survey, in which fewer than one-fifth said they would carry a weapon to deter crime, and about one-quarter of respondents favored such action as forming a vigilante group. Despite their dim view of the police, much of the public sees them as a last resort when faced with serious crime.

The courts, forming the other pillar of the justice system, have somewhat greater credibility with the public than do the police. Nearly three-fourths of respondents in 2001 (Table 35) express some degree of trust for the courts (a level virtually unchanged from the previous survey), although little more than one-quarter are highly trustful. There is, however, a perception that the legal system is also susceptible to corruption: 92 percent of those interviewed in 2001 believe that judges and magistrates are tainted by corruption, although in contrast to the police, only one-third believe this is a common problem. The public generally has respect for the courts, as 72 percent agree that "the courts have the right to make decisions that people always have to abide by."

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Table 35: The Judiciary and the Rule of Law

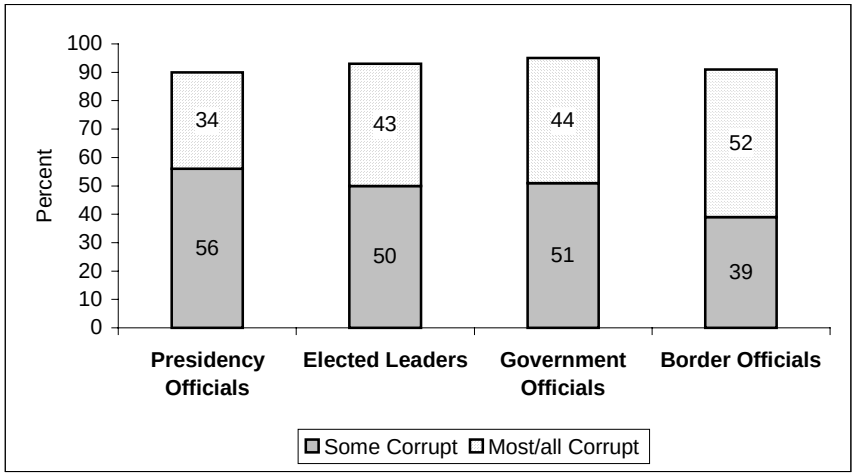
	2000	2001
How much do you trust the courts? *(% with some trust)*	75	74
How many judges and magistrates do you think are involved in corruption? *(% saying some/many/all)* *(of which: % saying many/all)*	n/a	92 34
"The courts have the right to make decisions that people always have to abide by" *(% agree)*	n/a	72
How often are people treated unequally under the law in Nigeria? *(% rarely/often/always)* *(of which: % often/always)*	n/a	74 50
Democratic vs. military government: equal and fair treatment for all *(% saying democracy better)*	65	52
Democratic vs. military government: fear of unjust arrest *(% saying democracy better)*	n/a	71

Fairness and equal protection are integral to an effective rule of law. Generally speaking, Nigerians have scant confidence in the equitable application of the law (see Table 35). More than seven out of ten believe that citizens are sometimes treated unequally under the law, and 50 percent say this happens much of the time. Furthermore, in the public mind, democracy now contrasts less favorably with the military regime than was the case immediately after the transition. In the 2001 survey, 52 percent of respondents believe that the prospects for people to be treated fairly and equally are better under the present administration than under its predecessor; this represents a drop of 13 percentage points from the 2000 survey. But Nigerians perceive significant improvement in terms of the fear of unjust arrest: 71 percent believe that this danger is less now than under military rule.

Corruption

Endemic corruption impedes the performance of public agencies and it has the potential to undermine the legitimacy of the political system. Prodigious corruption has been a prominent public concern during previous military regimes. The magnitude of the problem has been highlighted by the recent effort to recover assets accumulated by the late General Sani Abacha. Public dismay over corruption was also instrumental in the decline of support for the failed Second Republic. Not surprisingly, Nigerians continue to see corruption as a major problem. In the first Afrobarometer survey, 94 percent believed that Nigerians offer bribes at least sometimes to public officials, while nearly three-fourths disagreed with the statement that "bribery is not common among public officials in Nigeria."

Figure 12: Popular Perceptions of Corruption Among Public Officials



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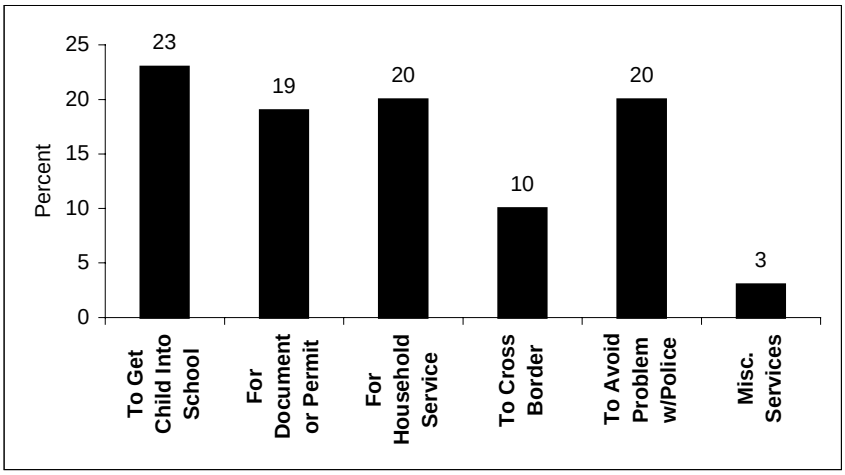
The 2001 Afrobarometer survey confirms this "sociotropic" view of a general environment of corruption. The questionnaire for the second survey asks specifically about corruption among different elements of government, including officials in the presidency, elected leaders, government officials, and border officials. For each group, as displayed in Figure 12, at least 90 percent of those interviewed perceive some degree of corruption. In other words, Nigerians almost universally believe many of their public officials are corrupt. There is a distinction, however, in the degree of perceived corruption, as 52 percent believe that most or all border officials are corrupt, compared with 44 percent for other civil servants, 43 percent in the case of politicians, and 34 percent for officials in the presidency.

Figure 13: Extent of Bribery



There is an apparent gap between the sociotropic view of corruption and personal experience with the problem, seen in Figure 13. Despite a common perception of pervasive corruption, the majority of Nigerians report that they have not paid bribes for essential government services. When asked about bribes for school placement, documents or permits, border crossing, household or miscellaneous services, and problems with the police, in each instance more than three-quarters of respondents say they have never had to pay a bribe. The incidence of reported bribery is highest (23 percent) for getting a child into school, and lowest (3 percent) for miscellaneous general services.

This does not provide the full picture, however. Overall, the incidence of bribery is more common than it appears from assessing each service separately. When aggregating all forms of bribery, we find that a slight majority (52 percent) of Nigerians report they have never paid a bribe to any public official, while 47 percent have furnished a bribe at some time. Experience of corruption is not distributed evenly among the population, as urban residents, who have more frequent contact with public officials, are far more likely (56 percent) to pay bribes than rural dwellers (39 percent). Regional disparities are also evident. In Lagos, 53 percent report paying bribes, with an even higher incidence (60 percent) in the South South states. The mainly rural North East, by contrast, reports an incidence of bribery just half that of the South South.

Furthermore, the example of bribery does not exhaust the range of corrupt activities, which include embezzlement, fraud, nepotism and favoritism, kickbacks, and other collusive practices. Many people undoubtedly have these forms of corruption in mind when they answer questions about the general prevalence of corruption. With regard to these other practices, it is obviously difficult (if not impossible) for a survey to uncover personal involvement.

In the early months after the transition, President Obasanjo declared that his administration would vigorously take on the problem of corruption. Several public measures reinforced this message, including the termination of contracts and land allotments made under the previous military regime, and efforts to recover ill-gotten gains from the Abacha era. An anti-corruption bill was also presented

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to the National Assembly, and passed by the legislature in February 2000. In the first Afrobarometer survey, the public widely credited the new government for its efforts. Three-quarters agreed that "the President will fight corruption wherever he finds it," while 83 percent agreed that corruption was worse under preceding military regimes than the new democracy.

Table 36: Handling Corruption

	2000	2001
How well is government handling corruption?		
(% well)	64	48
(% poorly)	32	49
Democracy v. military rule: corruption		
(% democracy less corrupt)	n/a	42
(% the same)		27
(% military regime less corrupt)		29

Now (see Table 36), we find that Nigerians are more critical of government measures to combat corruption, and relatively ambivalent about the progress that has been made since the change of government. In the earlier survey, nearly two-thirds approved the government's handling of corruption; in the 2001 survey the responses are evenly divided among those who approve of the performance of anti-corruption efforts and those who disapprove. The contrast with the military era is also relatively weak in 2001: while 42 percent believe the current government is less corrupt than its predecessor, another 27 percent say that corruption is the same under the two regimes, and 29 percent regard current conditions as worse than under the military.

The Rule of Law and Democratic Legitimacy

In view of the shortcomings of the rule of law, we wish to inquire whether these problems have a significant impact on the legitimacy of Nigeria's emerging democratic system. Here we consider two dimensions of the rule of law – personal safety and corruption – and we evaluate them against three aspects of legitimacy: satisfaction with democracy, rejection of non-democratic alternatives, and patience with the democratic regime.

Table 37: Personal Security and Democratic Legitimacy

Estimation of personal security:	*Worse*	*Better*
Satisfied with democracy (%)	49	64
Dissatisfied with democracy (%)	51	36
Reject non-democratic alternatives (%)	59	64
Patient with democracy (%)	72	79

We might expect that perceptions of crime and personal safety would influence the evaluation of democracy, since people hope for improvements in law enforcement from the new regime. Indeed, as seen in Table 37, assessments of personal security clearly affect satisfaction with democracy. Citizens who believe that personal safety is worse under the present regime are evenly divided in general satisfaction or dissatisfaction with democracy, while those who see an improvement in personal safety are satisfied with democracy by a majority of 64 percent.

Although perceptions of individual security affect satisfaction with political performance, these concerns have only a slight influence on underlying preferences for democracy or patience with the current regime. Those who see an adverse trend in crime are slightly more likely to embrace non-democratic political alternatives than those who see improvements in security, and there is a modest difference in expressions of patience with the present system.

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Assessments of corruption are another aspect of political performance that might have a substantial effect on Nigerians' attitudes toward the democratic regime. When considering the new leadership (Table 38), we find that Nigerians who perceive little corruption among elected leaders are largely satisfied with democracy, by a margin of 62 percent. On the other hand, those who believe that elected leaders are entirely corrupt are relatively dissatisfied, by a slim majority. These proportions are comparable when we consider perceptions of corruption within the presidency and among various government officials.

Table 38: Perceptions of Corruption and Political Legitimacy

Perceptions of corruption among elected officials:	***A lot***	***A little***
Satisfied with democracy (%)	49	62
Dissatisfied with Democracy	51	38
Reject non-democratic alternatives (%)	58	61
Patient with democracy (%)	64	76
How is government handling corruption:	***Badly***	***Well***
Satisfied with democracy (%)	43	71
Dissatisfied with democracy	57	29
Reject non-democratic alternatives (%)	58	59
Patient with democracy (%)	68	78
Democracy vs. military rule: corruption	***Dem. worse***	***Dem. Better***
Satisfied with democracy (%)	52	65
Dissatisfied with democracy	48	35
Reject non-democratic alternatives (%)	59	66
Patient with democracy (%)	56	79

Perceptions of corruption do not significantly affect preferences for non-democratic alternatives; about 60 percent of citizens reject all authoritarian options, regardless of whether they perceive little corruption or a great deal among politicians and civil servants. Political patience, however, is related to these perceptions. The more that people believe elected officials are corrupt, the less patient they are with the democratic system: there is a difference of 12 percentage points in the expression of political patience.

A less favorable evaluation of the government's efforts to control corruption strongly affects political satisfaction, but it has no impact on democratic preferences, and a modest effect on political patience (see Table 38). Nigerians who believe the government is doing very badly in handling corruption are relatively dissatisfied with democracy (57 percent), while those who think the administration is doing very well on corruption are quite satisfied (71 percent). Nigerians are equally likely to reject non-democratic politics regardless of their view of government performance on corruption. Performance on corruption does affect political patience, as 68 percent of those who think the government is doing a poor job express patience with the regime, compared with 78 percent among those who applaud government efforts.

Finally, the comparative performance of regimes has a substantial influence on attitudes toward democratic rule. Citizens who believe the democratic government is less corrupt than its military predecessor are more satisfied with democracy (65 percent) than those who see more corruption (52 percent). Perceptions of corruption slightly reduce the rejection of non-democratic politics: 66 percent among those who perceive less corruption under democracy, 59 percent among those who see more. Finally, perceptions of corruption are strongly related to political patience. More than three-fourths of those who see the current regime as less corrupt express patience with the current system. For those who view the present regime as "much more" corrupt than the military system, 56 percent are inclined toward patience, while 44 percent would be willing to contemplate alternatives if there is no change soon.

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VI. THE VIEW FROM THE REGIONS

In much of the preceding discussion we have treated popular attitudes in Nigeria at the national level, with few distinctions among different groups in the population. Yet Nigeria's diversity is one of its defining features, and the variations in attitudes among different ethnic and regional communities profoundly influence the nation's public life. The Afrobarometer surveys permit comparison of attitudes among major sections of the country. Following the general framework expressed in the Constitution and in public discussion, the regional breakdown has been defined in terms of geopolitical zones: South West, South East, South South, North West, North East, and North Central (or Middle Belt).[18]

For purposes of sampling and analysis, we have also distinguished Lagos as a separate region. Current estimates tell us that Lagos includes at least 10 percent of the national population, and this city is of course the commercial hub as well as an important center of intellectual life and political activity. With its diverse population, Lagos is quite distinct from the surrounding southwestern states, which are mainly Yoruba in character. When we consider Lagos as a separate area, two things are quickly apparent. On many political and economic questions, the attitudes of people in Lagos and in the North West region define the poles of national opinion. Furthermore, attitudes in Lagos are different from those in the other states of the South West. In general, it can be seen that views in the South West match the South East and the South South more often than they align with those in the premier city.

Regional Attitudes Toward Democracy

Considering general attitudes toward democracy (Table 39), the regions display varying evaluations of democratic rule as well as different degrees of attachment to the democratic system. (In order to facilitate comparison, the poles of opinion are highlighted in bold type). Citizens in the southern states are relatively dissatisfied with Nigerian democracy, although they largely prefer a democratic regime and have little tolerance for non-democratic alternatives. Those in the north take a less critical view of the current system, and they are substantially satisfied with political performance. Yet they are not as strongly attached to the regime of democracy, and are somewhat more willing to countenance alternatives to the present system.

Residents of Lagos are the least satisfied with democracy, as fewer than 40 percent offer a positive assessment of current political conditions. In the North West, by contrast, nearly three-quarters approve the political climate, a stark gap (of 34 percentage points) in perceptions with Lagos. Generally those in the northern regions are far more satisfied than those in the southern states, where half or fewer express approval for democratic performance.

Dissatisfaction with overall democratic performance is further reflected in appraisals of the extent of democracy. In Lagos, nearly two-thirds regard Nigeria as a democracy with many problems, while less than one percent (virtually none of the respondents) view the country as a full democracy. In the North West, only one-third see a highly troubled democracy, while 15 percent are satisfied that democracy has been fully realized. Here again, a regional distinction is evident, though with less variation than in general satisfaction.

[18] For purposes of sampling and analysis the regions are defined as follows: Lagos; South West (Ogun, Ondo, Ekiti, Osun, Oyo); South East (Abia, Enugu, Ebonyi, Imo, Anambra); South South (Edo, Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers, Cross River, Akwa-Ibom); North West (Kano, Kaduna, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, Zamfara, Jigawa); North East (Adamawa, Bauchi, Gombe, Yobe, Taraba, Borno); North Central or Middle Belt (Kogi, Kwara, Benue, Niger, Plateau, Nasarawa, Abuja/FCT).

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Table 39: Attitudes Toward Democracy, by Region

	Lagos	South West	South East	South South	North West	North East	North Central	Nigeria
Satisfaction w/ democracy *(% satisfied)*	**39**	46	51	47	**73**	71	65	*57*
Extent of democracy: A democracy with many problems (%)	**63**	51	52	49	**32**	48	43	*46*
A full democracy (%)	**0.5**	6	8	8	**15**	14	11	*10*
Support for democracy *(% prefer democracy)*	72	77	**89**	79	**57**	72	70	*71*
Alternatives to democracy: Military rule *(% approve)*	**4**	**4**	7	8	**14**	6	10	*8*
Civilian "strongman" *(% approve)*	12	**9**	10	10	**13**	10	12	*11*

The poles of opinion shift when we turn to support for democracy. Here, the South East stands out as the region most attached to the democratic ideal, while the North West is most equivocal toward democracy, indeed significantly below the national average in democratic preferences. Along with a lower attachment to a democratic regime, a greater proportion of citizens in the North West would approve a return of the military or the emergence of a domineering president. Nonetheless, we observe that even in the North West, where general preferences for democracy are weakest, more than 85 percent do not approve of these non-democratic political options.

Reflecting the political sentiments emerging from the annulled 1993 elections, those in Lagos and the South West are most adamantly opposed to a return of the armed forces, yet they are no more likely than other regions to resist the idea of a strong executive.

Regional Views on Current National Issues

The 2001 Afrobarometer included a series of new questions on pressing issues of the day, including the Constitution, the allocation of oil revenues, the application of Sharia law, political violence, and national unity. We have already observed that a majority of Nigerians (see Table 3) do not believe the 1999 Constitution expresses their "values and aspirations." There is a good deal of difference among regions, however, as seen in Table 40. (Again, poles of opinion are rendered in bold type). Here we find that attitudes do not conform to north-south distinctions. Citizens in Lagos, the South South and the North East are relatively more confident in the Constitution (although a majority in all these areas do not approve the document), while those in the other southern states, the North West and the Middle Belt (North Central) express the least approval.

Without additional information, it is difficult to identify the basis for these evaluations. We observe, however, that the regions with the least esteem for the Constitution are areas where complaints of marginalization have been strong, the basis of federalism is contested, and the Constitution offers no specific redress. In the case of the South South, although residents often express concerns over a marginal position in the country, the constitutional increase in revenue allocation to the region could be a source of increased satisfaction.

Turning directly to the question of revenue distribution, the 1999 Constitution increases the proportion of oil revenues allotted on the basis of derivation to 13 percent. The inauguration of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) has been presented by government as a further commitment to the development of the oil-producing areas. These initiatives, however, have been contested by some as insufficient.

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When queried about the allocation of oil proceeds, it is not surprising to find deep regional divisions on this issue. Three-fourths of those in the South South (the region of the Niger Delta) support increased allotments of revenues to the communities where oil is produced. While no other region comes close to that level of support, there is considerable sympathy for this view in the South East and the South West, as well as a measure of acceptance in parts of the Middle Belt. In the far northern states, there is scant support for a greater emphasis on derivation in the revenue formula, and strong preferences for federal control of oil revenues. Lagos is largely in line with the north on this question. Those areas of the country that are especially reliant upon federal redistribution of oil revenues (including Lagos, which traditionally has claimed a large share of central resources) are least supportive of changes in the allocation formula.

Table 40: Views on National Issues, by Region
(percent agreeing with each statement)

	Lagos	**South West**	**South East**	**South South**	**North West**	**North East**	**North Central**	***Nigeria***
The Constitution expresses Nigerians' values	**33**	14	15	**33**	19	28	**13**	*22*
More oil revenues should go to the communities where it is produced	21	38	44	**75**	21	**12**	30	*34*
It is acceptable for some parts of the country to have Sharia law	**11**	24	**11**	**11**	**60**	43	30	*30*
It is sometimes necessary to use violence in politics	31	**40**	31	27	25	**23**	25	*28*
Nigeria should remain united as one country	85	65	**58**	64	79	**87**	82	*74*
The country should be broken apart	14	30	**34**	33	19	**10**	13	*22*

The expansion of Sharia law in 12 Nigerian states since 2000 has prompted a great deal of controversy and political turbulence. Here too, there are stark regional differences, largely along the lines that would be expected. Among residents of the North West, six in ten support the introduction of Sharia law in some parts of the country, while slightly more than 40 percent in the North East and 30 percent in the Middle Belt approve this initiative. About one-quarter of those in the South West, where a substantial Muslim population resides, endorse separate legal systems. In the predominantly-Christian southern states, as well as in Lagos, there is little support for the introduction of Sharia law and strong preference for a single, national common law system.

Muslim opinion is not uniform on this issue, however, as can be seen from Table 41. The north and the south present divergent profiles, with two-third of northern Muslims supporting Sharia, and nearly 60 percent of southern Muslims favoring a secular, uniform legal system in Nigeria. Region overshadows religion in views on Sharia law.

Table 41: Muslim Views on Sharia Law, by Region
(percent)

	Northern Muslims	Southern Muslims	Total Muslims
Sharia is acceptable for some parts of the country	65	38	53
Nigeria should have one common legal system	27	58	43

Referring again to Table 40, we see different attitudes toward the use of violence in politics. As we have observed, a majority of Nigerians reject political violence, yet a notable segment of the public accepts the idea that force may be used for political ends. The disturbing frequency of large-scale political violence since the transition to democracy fosters a good deal of insecurity in many parts of Nigeria, and presents a central challenge to the new government. Among the regions, those in the South West express the greatest tolerance of violence in politics, while the northeastern states reflect the least acceptance. Residents of Lagos and the South East are somewhat more willing to countenance violent conduct, while those in the North West, the South South and the Middle Belt appear least inclined to accept violence.

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One observation should be emphasized: when viewing the general patterns, there is no clear association between regional attitudes toward violence and the actual incidence of conflict around the country. There has been substantial violence in the South West (where popular attitudes might appear to be conducive to conflict), but also prodigious violence in the South South, the North West and the Middle Belt, which express low levels of tolerance for political violence. This suggests that we should inquire more closely into the distribution of attitudes within regions (i.e., among different groups, as well as age, education, and urban or rural residence) along with other factors such as membership in associations and political participation.

These major public issues, as well as the problem of political conflict, all raise questions about Nigeria's unity and stability. The 2001 Afrobarometer asked Nigerians whether they prefer to keep the country united, or believe that the sections of the country should go their separate ways. Overall, about three-quarters of Nigerians affirm national unity, while one-fifth could contemplate the breakup of the country. Sentiments for unity are strongest in the North East, along with the North West, the Middle Belt, and Lagos. The states of the "southern tier" are more willing to endorse the idea of division, with those in the South East expressing the lowest level of commitment to a unified Nigeria. By and large, the coastal areas with greater resources and more urbanization have greater sentiment for partition, although Lagosians are as committed to national unity as their fellow citizens in the north.

Regional Attitudes Toward the Economy

The regional pattern of attitudes toward the economy is broadly comparable to what we find with regard to democracy. By and large, Nigerians in the southern states are least satisfied with the current state of the economy, and relatively more critical of the government's economic policies. Yet many in the south also express stronger preferences for a market economy. The bold type in Table 42 shows the boundaries of these viewpoints.

Beginning with economic satisfaction (Table 42), we see an enormous divide between Lagos, where fewer than one in five rate the country's economic condition as good, and the North West, where 71 percent offer a favorable appraisal. Those in the North East are also relatively satisfied with the economy, while the north-central states, the South West and the South South are moderately negative on current economic conditions. After Lagos, citizens in the South East are most dissatisfied with the economy. The areas of least satisfaction are those with relatively higher levels of urbanization and a larger concentration of manufacturing activities, suggesting the segments of the public that have been especially affected by economic decline and instability in recent years.

In addition to general economic dissatisfaction, residents of Lagos are especially skeptical toward the government's efforts to reform the economy. Along with those in the South South, they express the least satisfaction with policies to reduce the role of government in the economy, and Lagosians are nearly unanimous in regarding government policies as highly inequitable. In the other southern regions we find comparable views, although there is somewhat less criticism of the imbalances of economic reforms.

Here again, the main counterpoint is with the North West, where nearly two-thirds of the public is satisfied with efforts to reduce the government's economic role, and a similar proportion (nearly 30 percentage points less than Lagos) criticize the inequities of economic policy. Similarly, those in the North East and the Middle Belt are relatively more satisfied with existing measures.

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Table 42: Attitudes Toward the Economy, by Region

	Lagos	South West	South East	South South	North West	North East	North Central	*Nigeria*
Country's present economic condition (% good)	**18**	40	28	43	**71**	64	49	*48*
Satisfied w/ government policy to reduce its role in economy (%)	40	43	44	**39**	**64**	58	61	*51*
Prefer Market Economy (%)	61	47	**73**	69	**37**	49	55	*54*
In order for economy to improve, necessary to accept hardships now (%)	**84**	77	41	53	72	**61**	68	*65*
Government economic policies have helped few, hurt most people (%)	**92**	72	73	79	**63**	66	72	*72*

General preferences for markets differ widely among Nigerians, though not along strict regional lines. Among the public in the South East and the South South, we find the greatest preferences for a market economy. Lagos comes next, with a level of pro-market sentiment somewhat greater than in the Middle Belt. The lowest level of market preferences by far is found among residents of the North West, where little more than one-third express a clear preference for a market economy. In the North East, as in the southwestern states surrounding Lagos, fewer than half the residents favor a market-oriented economic system.

It is also noteworthy that the most market-oriented areas (Lagos and the South South) are least satisfied with efforts to reduce the government's role in the economy. One interpretation of these results is that government initiatives to curtail economic intervention have not been far-reaching enough. Thus, for those who favor a larger economic role for the state, modest efforts at liberalization are viewed favorably; among those who prefer a greater role for markets, there is greater criticism of government policy.

Finally, we turn to the question of economic patience: how willing are Nigerians to accept difficult economic reforms? While there is a wide band of variation in attitudes (43 percentage points between the highest and lowest ratings), the geopolitical zones do not line up neatly on this question. Residents of Lagos, who are least satisfied with the current economy and most critical of government reform policies, nevertheless are most willing to tolerate painful economic policies, in the hope of later improvement. They are joined by a majority of citizens in the South West and the North West, who also express high levels of patience. Those in the South East and the South South are most inclined to want the government to change its policies now, while the northeastern and north-central states reflect moderate levels of patience with reform measures.

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VII. NIGERIA IN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

The political and economic mood in any given country can only be fully understood in comparative perspective. Raw data about public attitudes have little meaning unless interpreted against relevant points of comparison. Otherwise, how do we know whether popular evaluations of government performance are high or low or whether a country profile of public opinion is average or distinctive? So far, this report has relied mainly on comparisons over time by tracking the evolution of attitudes within Nigeria between early 2000 and late 2001. This analysis has shown, among other results, that popular economic satisfaction is low (but gradually increasing) whereas mass evaluations of political performance are high (but dropping quite quickly).

The Afrobarometer allows comparisons across space as well as over time. Since Round 1 surveys were conducted using roughly the same survey instrument in 12 African countries, it becomes possible to situate Nigeria internationally in relation to some of its sub-Saharan neighbors. And since several items in Afrobarometer questionnaires are derived from other global Barometers, the opportunity also arises to selectively compare Nigeria with emerging democracies elsewhere in the world, such as Eastern and Central Europe and Latin America.

Table 43 places popular political attitudes in Nigeria in international perspective. To begin with, it shows that mass support for democracy remains higher in Nigeria than in South Africa, the continent's other major regional power. But support for democracy is lower in Nigeria than in Botswana (mainland Africa's longest-standing multiparty democracy), Ghana (an immediate neighbor that has also recently emerged from military rule) and Tanzania (which, after Nigeria and South Africa, is the most populous country examined by the Afrobarometer). The current level of support for democracy in Nigeria registers just above the mean score for the other 11 African countries surveyed to date, in which 68 percent of all adults say that democracy is the best form of government. As transition euphoria has faded, therefore, Nigeria has dropped from a being a continental leader in such democratic commitments (in early 2000) to being merely slightly above average among African countries (in late 2001).

The question remains, however: Can Nigeria sustain this lower and more realistic level of popular support for democracy? Comparisons with Latin America may be relevant here. Across 17 countries in the region, only 47 percent of adults extended support to democracy in 2001, ranging from Uruguay at the top end to Brazil at the bottom end (see Table 43). Many of these countries underwent a transition to democracy in the early 1980s, at least a decade and a half before Nigeria. Support for democracy has recently declined, down from 58 percent in 1995. Brazil, with its large, multicultural population and legacy of military rule and patronage politics, is probably the best point of reference for Nigeria. Fifteen years after transition, support for democracy in Brazil stands at only 30 percent. Even if Nigeria never plumbs these depths, the Brazilian case suggests that further declines in support for democracy could occur in Nigeria in the future.

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Table 43: Nigerian Political Attitudes in International Perspective

	AFRICA					OTHER	
	Botswana (1999)	**Ghana** (1999)	**Nigeria (2001)**	**S. Africa** (2000)	**Tanzania** (2001)	**Uruguay** (2001)	**Brazil** (2001)
SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY							
Democracy is preferable:	83	77	**71**	60	84	79	30
Non-democratic government can be preferable:	7	9	**15**	13	11	10	18
Form of government doesn't matter to me:	6	14	**12**	21	5	8	31
Don't know:	3	0	**2**	6	0	3	21
SATISFACTION WITH DEMOCRACY							
Satisfied:	75	55	**55**	51	69	55	21
Dissatisfied:	22	32	**41**	44	21	42	66
This country is not a democracy:	1	0	**1**	1	3	-	-
Don't know:	3	13	**2**	4	7	2	13
						Czech. R. (1998)	**Ukraine** (1998)
REJECT MILITARY RULE							
Reject:	85	88	**81**	75	96	97	86
Do not reject:	9	10	**9**	10	4	3	14
Neutral:	1	0	**9**	12	0	0	0
Don't Know:	4	2	**2**	3	<1	0	0
REJECT STRONGMAN RULE							
Reject:	75	87	**71**	54	86	87	45
Do not reject:	29	12	**11**	38	13	13	55
Neutral:	1	0	**13**	3	0	0	0
Don't Know:	4	2	**5**	5	1	0	0
EXTENT OF DEMOCRACY							
A full democracy:	46	-	**10**	26	18	-	-
A democracy with minor problems:	36	70	**37**	33	35	-	-
A democracy with major problems:	8	-	**46**	24	28	-	-
Not a democracy:	5	12	**5**	9	9	-	-
Don't know:	5	18	**2**	8	8	-	-

Moreover, from a pan-African perspective, Nigeria is now no better than average in terms of satisfaction with democracy. To be sure, more adults are satisfied with democracy in Nigeria than in South Africa. But Nigeria's score on this indicator is now *exactly average* for the other countries in Round 1 of the Afrobarometer (55 percent). During the 19-month period between January 2000 and August 2001, Nigeria slipped from first place to eighth place with respect to the level of satisfaction with democracy among 12 countries surveyed. It now ties with Ghana under Rawlings, and exceeds only South Africa, Lesotho and Zimbabwe. And, within two years of transition, Nigeria has already dropped to the level of Uruguay in the proportion of citizens who say they are satisfied with the way democracy actually works in their country (see Table 43).

As pro-democracy sentiments have dissipated, so has anti-authoritarianism. By August 2001, Nigerians rejected military rule as firmly as other Africans (mean = 81 percent). But Nigerians were *below* average in rejecting rule by a civilian strongman (71 versus 79 percent). In contrast to Nigeria, *both* civilian and military dictatorship are strongly resisted in Ghana and Tanzania. Casting the comparative net even wider, one finds that the Czech Republic represents a consolidating democracy in which overwhelming majorities of citizens shun dictatorships of both types (see Table 43). By

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contrast, democratization in Ukraine is undercut by the majority of the population who actually support the idea of a strong president who can control elections and parliament and who can make all important political decisions on his own. We are not suggesting that Olesegun Obasanjo is a prospective Leonid Kuchma or that Nigerians are as tolerant of civilian strongmen as Ukranians. But, perhaps because Nigeria has never experienced an episode of strong civilian leadership, the public at large is somewhat less threatened by the idea of this kind of government than by the prospect of a return to military rule.

The fragility of the new political regime in Nigeria is very well illustrated by cross-national comparisons on the perceived extent of democracy. Only 10 percent of Nigerians think that their country enjoys a full, consolidated democracy. Nigeria ranks *last* on this indicator among the five African countries in Table 43; indeed, Nigeria surpasses only Zimbabwe for all 12 countries surveyed so far. Instead, almost half of all Nigerians think that they live in a democracy with "major problems," the highest proportion expressing such concerns for *any* country in the Afrobarometer. According to this indicator, therefore, Nigeria's is the *most* fragile of Africa's new democracies. We think that Nigerians are being entirely realistic here. It is always difficult to construct a working democracy in a deeply divided society, especially where political institutions are untested and if, as in Nigeria, many citizens retain loyalties to sub-national identity groups.

Compared to political attitudes, the economic attitudes of Nigerians may seem to be even more sober. Certainly, fewer people are satisfied with current economic conditions than with current political conditions. But in comparative perspective (both cross-nationally and over time), economic attitudes in Nigeria are relatively buoyant (see Table 44). Of the five African countries displayed in Table 44, Nigeria is the *only* country in which more citizens appraise current economic conditions as being "good" rather than "bad." Across the 12-country Afrobarometer, only Uganda and Namibia share Nigeria's relatively positive economic mood. In this respect, Nigeria more closely resembles the Czech Republic than Uruguay, Brazil or Ukraine. Moreover, as reported earlier, assessments of current economic conditions have risen slightly over the past 18 months in Nigeria. Offsetting this rosy picture, however, one must note that fewer than half of all adult Nigerians think that current economic conditions are "good."

On attitudes toward economic reform, Nigerians are more polarized than other Africans surveyed. On one hand, they are *more supportive* than average of reforms to put education on a cost-sharing basis, with two out of three being willing to pay school fees as a means of raising educational standards. This level of support for user fees is above the norm for other Afrobarometer countries (67 percent versus 61 percent). On the other hand, Nigerians are *more opposed* to reforms to reduce the role of the state by cutting civil service jobs, with four out of five wishing to maintain the current level of public employment, even if this is expensive for the country. This degree of opposition to civil service retrenchment is even further above the norm for other Afrobarometer countries (81 percent versus 58 percent).

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Table 44: Nigerian Economic Attitudes in International Perspective

	Botswana (1999)	**Ghana** (1999)	**Mali** (2001)	**Nigeria** (2001)	**S. Africa** (2000)	**Uru** (01)	**Bra** (01)	**Cze** (98)	**Ukr** (98)
CURRENT ECONOMIC CONDITIONS									
Bad:	55	66	65	**43**	68	47	38	47	84
Neutral:	9	0	0	**8**	16	42	43	1	1
Good:	32	34	34	**48**	15	8	17	52	15
Don't Know:	4	0	1	**1**	2	3	2	0	0

Botswana (1999)	**Ghana** (1999)	**Mali** (2001)	**Nigeria** (2001)	**S. Africa** (2000)	**Tanzania (2001)**	**Uganda** (2000)

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Tanzania, Nigeria is the only country in which an absolute majority expresses such economic patience. We take these figures to indicate that, if the Nigerian government decides to persist with policies of economic liberalization, it can do so without evoking a popular backlash.

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